

PlayStation plus

RELOADED A LITTLE BIT OF
ULTRA-VIOLENCE

EVERY NEW
PLAYSTATION
GAME REVIEWED
AND RATED

FREE DOOM
GRAPHIC NOVELLA

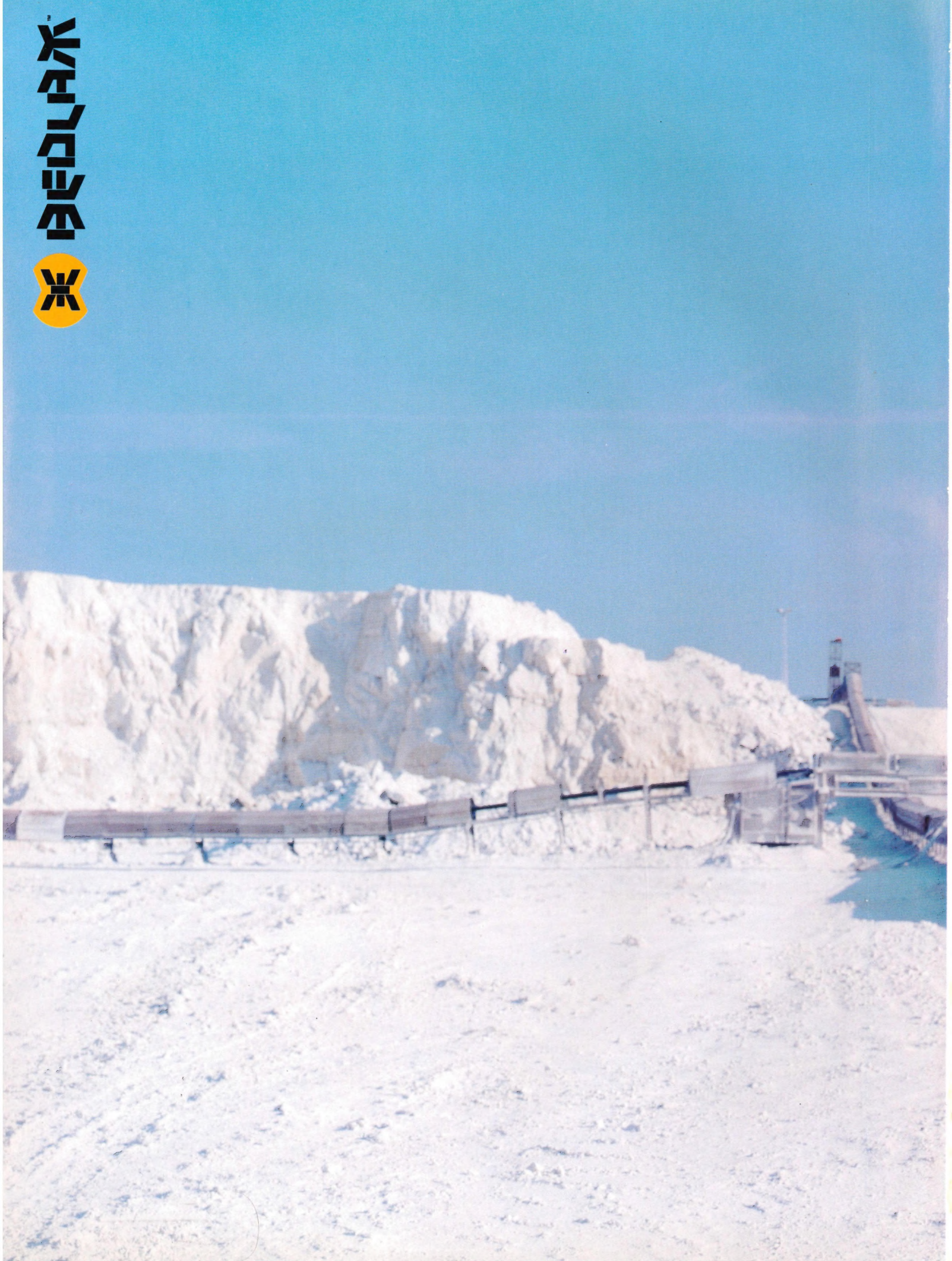
AD NAUSEAM?
ASA vs THE
GAMES INDUSTRY

FORMULA 1
THE EXPERT GUIDE

**STREET
FIGHTER ALPHA 2**
HOW DO KEN?

STAR GLADIATOR
CAPCOM'S MASTERPIECE







MIRAGE



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NAMCO

MD 01

WASHINGTON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL
Department of Psychiatry, Chicago, Illinois
CONFIDENTIAL

No. 3765

PATIENT'S SURNAME Delgado

RACE Hispanic

D.O.B. 4/31/71

OTHER NAMES James, Jesus
SESSION 1

SEX Male
ART THERAPIST Kath MacDonald

RELEVANT HISTORY

Initial assessment diagnosed Jimmy as having an acute personality disorder. There is no history of mental illness in his family.

COMMENTS

To confirm diagnosis I asked Jimmy to draw a self portrait. He proceeded to draw a picture of an aggressive Ninja War Lord committing Hari-Kari - labelling the drawing as "me". Jimmy told me his name was Yoshimitsu to heal himself. Supernatural powers and Jimmy's confident belief that suicidal tendencies are very worrying. I now believe he can cheat death in some form of manic psychosis. Jimmy may be in some form of manic psychosis.

NOTES

Yoshimitsu is a character from Tekken II, Jimmy's Sony PlayStation video game, which he plays continually.

DATE 7/15/96

SIGNED

K.M.

K.M.



No 3765



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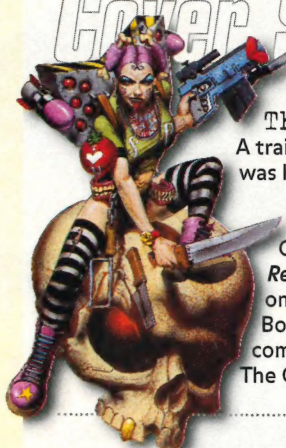
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Cover Story



The Decks Are (Re)Loaded
A trail of guts, gore and intestinal tracts was left in the wake Gremlin's award-winning shoot 'em up *Loaded*. Now FUB is back, in a new body, now called CHEB but just as mean, in Gremlin's *Reloaded*. And coming along for the ride once again are Mamma, Cap'n Hands, Bounca and Butch, now joined by newcomers Sister Magpie and our cover star The Consumer.

Special Report

Tokyo Game Show '96

The next generation of PlayStation releases were unveiled at the Tokyo Game Show, Japan's largest video game exhibition. Within the 17,200 square metre hall, 365 new video games were unveiled, with the majority PlayStation-bound. And that includes Capcom's stunning *Resident Evil 2*...



Special Report



The Hard Sell

Video game companies are using increasingly controversial advertising to promote their games. What happens when they cross the line of what's acceptable? Who decides? The Advertising Standards Authority do – they regulate the world of print advertising, investigating adverts based on complaints from the public. If they uphold the complaint, they expect the advert to be withdrawn. It's something that's been happening an awful lot in the world of video games recently. *PlayStation Plus* took a trip to the ASA's offices to find out what exactly they do.

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THE SHOW IS THE MOST IMPORTANT IN JAPAN, MAINLY BECAUSE UNLIKE ANY UK EQUIVALENTS, IT IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC, ENABLING THEM TO GET A FORETASTE OF WHAT IS COMING UP.



PlayStation reigns supreme at Tokyo Game Show '96

Big in Japan



One of the most important events in the Japanese gaming calendar this year took place between Thursday August 22nd and Saturday the 24th. The 1996 Tokyo Game Show was the place where 87 of the leading Japanese developers and software houses unveiled titles for release over the coming twelve months. The show was held at 'Tokyo Big Site', the largest exhibition centre in Japan, which is just a stone's throw away from the centre of the city, and boasts a main hall which measures 17,200 square metres. Despite the grand size of the impressive building, though, the queues were immense as eager games players lined up for first sightings of the latest PlayStation, Saturn and Nintendo 64 releases. Every major software title was premiered in some shape or form, with old show stalwarts such as Sony's *Arc the Lad II*

and *Final Fantasy VII* from Square lining up alongside a brief video presentation of Capcom's eagerly-awaited *Bio-Hazard/Resident Evil 2*.

The show was open from 9:00 - 6:00 each day, and the show organisers, CESA (Computer Entertainment Software Association), were predicting a turnout of roughly 100,000 punters, while NHK, Japan's national television network, reported a very impressive 28,000 people during the first day - although the 100,000 accumulative tally is expected to have been broken by the Saturday, which was naturally the busiest day of the three. In an unusual move for a Japanese show, the CESA made no allocation for trade-only days, preferring to keep the show open for the general public on all days.

Join us as we visit the biggest movers and shakers of the show...

SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT

Sony Japan's stand was an impressive-looking affair (and notably larger than that of Sega's), but the majority of titles on display have been seen in depth before. RPG show veterans, *Arc the Lad II* and *Wild Arms*, are progressing nicely, but as Sony's RPGs take several hours play before things start to happen, punters were left to wander around the early stages. That said, Square's *Final Fantasy VII* was displayed on a video wall, as

MACHINE COMPARISON

How the PlayStation performed in terms of product numbers:

PLATFORM	TITLES
PlayStation	164
Saturn	110
PC	29
Nintendo64	14



JUST A FEW OF THE 28,000 GAMERS WHO VISITED THE SHOW ON THE VERY FIRST DAY.

Sony took the opportunity to showcase the game's superb graphics and combat system.

Originality plays a huge part in Japanese releases, and Sony didn't disappoint. Although it wasn't on display, the obligatory stand girls were handing out flyers for a game called *Beldeslba War Record*. Resembling Sega's *Panzer Dragoon*, the graphics look superb and we'll follow up on it as soon as materials become available. Equally interesting was *Parappa the Rapper*, a bizarre game which casts the player as a rapper currently taking lessons to become *tres cool*. As the scenario suggests, music is an integral part of Parappa's adventures, and the assorted stages are based on a level of rapping development. Hmmm.

Sweepstation Depth is another music-based title, and is described by Sony as 'Interactive Music Soft' — although we'd say it was more like Sega's *Ecco the Dolphin*. Controlling said mammal, the in-game ocean is full of deadly adversaries who should be avoided or attacked. However, the dolphin's movements affect the sonics, which are said to create a different sound every time it is played.

Finally, to rival a similar idea from Takara, Sony have developed a head-set device for the 'ultimate gaming experience'. Again, the device wasn't on display, but initial reports imply it is lighter than the Takara unit, and that these could be the next big thing to hit Japan. Sony are particularly keen to tie it in with *Sweepstation Depth*, as they hope it will promote a greater feeling of immersion than if played off a conventional monitor.



CAPCOM

The big news was obviously the first screening of *Resident Evil 2* footage. The short clip was enough to whet the majority of appetites, though, with the major changes (more on screen, more detailed sprites) already very apparent. The storyline is detailed in a larger news story elsewhere, but it certainly looks as if Capcom have created a game to outdo the stunning original. Needless to say, the rest of Capcom's stand had a predominantly *Street Fighter* feel, although mainly due to the imminent Saturn version as opposed to the PlayStation version which had gone on sale a few weeks earlier, while *Star Gladiator* and a rather impressive conversion of *Marvel Super-heroes* also kept binary batlers more than happy — and Capcom's normally secretive R'n'D teams were on hand to field questions about the development of the former.

FULL LIST OF STAND HOLDERS AT TOKYO GAME SHOW '96

SONY
COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT
SEGA ENTERPRISES
COMPILE
CAPCOM
KONAMI
SQUARE
NAMCO
NEC
ELECTRONIC ARTS/VICTOR
JALECO
TAITO
HUDSONSOFT
IMAGINEER/
GENKI
WARP
ENIX
VIRGIN
SUNSOFT
TECMO
BANDAI
BAN PRESTO
ASMIC
ARTDINK
ACCLAIM JAPAN
ATLUS
SNK
GLAMS
GAME ARTS
TOEI
TAKARA
MEDIAQUEST
XING
ORKS/HEAVEN
CATAPULT
ENTERTAINMENT
PIONEER LDC
NEC
INTERCHANNEL
KOTOBUKI
SYSTEM
RIVERHILL SOFT
ASK KODANSHA
OZ CLUB
CULTURE BRAIN
T&E SOFT
INTERMEDIA
TOMY
NIHON
VICTOR/PACK-IN
VIDEO
HUMAN
VING

The surprise of the show, however, came in the form of *Super Puzzle Fighter II X*. Apparently, the arcade boards last-minute arrival caught some of Capcom's staff on the hop, but this *Columns/Crazy Cross* puzzler is said to be incredibly playable, pitting the player against the minds of Ryu, Ken and co as opposed to their might. Finally, Capcom topped it all off with *MegaMan 8* which follows the series platform conventions, and *Breath of Fire III* an RPG continuation of the popular Super NES series.

NAMCO

A rather sedate stand for the *Tekken* masters, with *Tekken 2* forming the main part of the stand — albeit to promote the new Namco Joystick which has been developed for use with the company's fighting games. Disappointingly, the forth-



coming *Soul Edge* conversion was only represented by a couple of arcade machines, which is surprising when the code is said to be approaching an 80% complete state. The fourth instalment of the *Namco Museum* series was also on display, but the majority of interest was being given to a *Smash Tennis* tournament, mainly because a group of rather attractive young ladies in tennis outfits were offering punters the chance to try their luck on the PlayStation version.

SQUARE

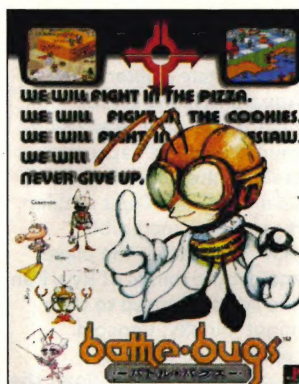
Ignoring the flyer route taken by other companies at the show, Square were handing out *Final Fantasy VII* demo

CDs — giving over the majority of their stand to cope with the demand! Every now and then a stand worker would shout out something along the lines of 'get your free CD!' and all intention of queuing would go out of the window as the throng massed to snatch away copies. According to Square, by the end of the show they had got rid of over 100,000 CDs, proving just how high the demand is for *Final Fantasy VII* in Japan. The arcade-style booth where their titles could be played was dedicated to *Tobal No. 1* and the *Final Fantasy VII* demo given away with it, while the front of the stand was dominated by a large screen rolling through demos of their games, including *Bushido Blade*, *Final Fantasy Tactics*, and *Sa Ga Frontier*.

KONAMI

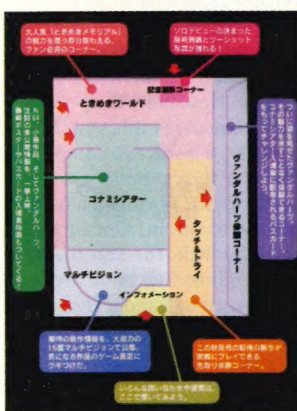
Within Japanese show circles, Konami have earned themselves something of a reputation for intricate stands. However, they out did themselves this year by creating a booth so complex that the flyers they were handing out featured a map of how to get in! Once inside the labyrinth, the stand was divided into five main areas, dedicated to *Vandal Hearts*, *Tokimeki Memorial*, general releases, a Konami Theatre, and Multi-Vision. The Konami Theatre, and entry was via a massive queue which took over thirty minutes to get to the front of. Inside was a presentation of Konami's forthcoming Nintendo 64 releases, although this was alternated with showings of promos for *Vandal Hearts* and a KCE Japan game. *Vandal Hearts* is set for a UK release shortly after Christmas, and is a cross between an RPG and a war game. Initially, the player wanders around in typical RPG fashion, adding people you meet to your army, but the actual bat-





THE KONAMI STAND WAS ONE OF THE BEST ATTENDED, WITH VANDAL HEARTS GRABBING THE ATTENTION OF THE VISITORS.

Opinion The success of Tokyo Game Show '96 shows a huge division between the Japanese and UK software industries. With a second show planned for the end of October, the UK is still without a video game show where the public can try out all the forthcoming releases. Granted, the UK is a considerably smaller market than that of Japan, but with the exception of ECTS (a trade-only affair where European software houses unveil new releases to the press and distributors), we have nothing to compare. The last games show the public could visit was GamesMaster Live at the Birmingham NEC three or four years ago, and while the venue was slightly too large for the assorted stalls, surely a more centralised and modest-sized base, such as Olympia or Earl's Court would be ideal? With over 300,000 PlayStations sold in the UK, a huge number of PCs, and lesser amounts of Saturns and Nintendo 64 consoles, surely it must be time for the software industry to open its doors and let the public see what they will be playing next year. After all, word of mouth is a brilliant way to gain people's interest... **SM**



tle sequences are considerably more complex. For example, the action takes place on a 3D plain, complete with small hills and dips. Thus, if the player attacks an opponent from a hill, their arrows travel further, yet they are harder for the enemy to retaliate against — thus allowing strategies to be applied to some of the tougher gangs you'll meet.

The aforementioned Multi-Vision was a series of sixteen monitors displaying promos

and game action from the titles on the stand and others on their way. One of the games which generated the most interest, however, was *Policenauts*, the continuing saga of Konami's gritty cyberpunk series. The queues to play this point 'n' click adventure were massive, possibly because the dark storyline and gruesome scenes have generated a lot of advance press and hype.

Konami also had new versions of old favourites on display, with two new versions of *Parodius* (*Sexy Parodius* and *Parodius Forever with Me*), a 1997 edition of *Winning Eleven/Goalstorm*, and *NBA Power Dunks 2* which is liable to be renamed *NBA in the Zone 2* when it hits these shores. Finally, *Lightning Legend* marked Konami's first foray into the 3D beat 'em up arena which the UK division are said to be very happy with.

BEST OF THE REST

The aforementioned companies, along with Sega, had the biggest stands of the show, but wandering around there were more than a few interesting titles on offer. Data East had an unnamed puzzle game on display which mixed elements of *Bust A Move 2* and *Crazy Cross*, with the player using a cutesy character to line up sequences of colour-coded bubbles, with bonuses awarded for chain reactions. The giants behind the *Leisure*

Suit Larry and *King's Quest* series for the PC, Sierra, had an interesting little number called *Battle Bugs* on display. Using an isometric perspective, the game is a cross between worms and strategy war games, with the player guiding an army of bugs into battle against a selection of CPU-controlled opponents. The graphics use a cartoon style and each insect comes equipped with individual skills for use in combat. With Sierra about to dip a tentative toe into the UK market, there's every possibility we may see *Battle Bugs* on these shores during the middle of next year.

Tecmo had a neat twist on the fighting game genre with *Monster Farm*. Having selected a baby dinosaur or one of the many monster styles on offer, the player acts as trainer for the beast equivalent of Mike Tyson. With a tight deadline given for a series of fights, the player exercises their beast, ensures it eats healthily, and is fully prepared for the battles ahead. As the opponents get stronger, so must the training intensify, and huge rewards allow the would-be champion to buy better facilities for their preparation.

A walk over to Tonkin House's medium-sized stall saw the *V-Tennis* team proffering an enhanced sequel, and showing an attractive RPG under the flowery title of *Ode to the Sunset Era*. While it looks similar to any

other RPG on the horizon, it features some attractive graphics and nice Manga characters. Unfortunately, with *Final Fantasy VII* on the horizon, a UK release for this game is uncertain.

Jaleco are now established in a London office, and one of their initial titles was on display. *Tetris Plus* is based on the old puzzle favourite, and while the basic aim of interlocking a series of shapes remains the same, the graphics are brighter and now features a series of cutesy characters to play against — one of whom resembled a certain Brooklyn plumber and star of countless Nintendo platform games. *King of Boxing* is a pugilism offering from Victor, and uses huge sprites as its combatants. The number of moves are plentiful and realistic, and a number of intelligent CPU characters are promised, and better still JVC are set to release it here nearer Christmas.

A great number of UK-developed titles were also on show, proving that we are most certainly up there with the best in terms of PlayStation development.

The Japanese version of *Tunnel B1* masquerades under the title of *Finalist* and is raising a few eyebrows, while Acclaim's *Alien Trilogy* was also deemed very impressive. Similarly, Sony UK's home-grown *Total NBA '96* has been released, and Activision's forthcoming *Blast Chamber* gained a small but very interested crowd.

Japanese coverage by
Warren Harrod

GAME GENRES:

Current trends in Japanese gaming:

GENRE:	TOTAL:
Simulation	68
Sports/Fighting	63
Adventure	31
Shoot 'em up	29
Action	24
RPG	20
Puzzle	16
Miscellaneous	114

MEDIAWORKS
ALTRON
EPOCH
GAGA
COMMUNICATIONS
NIHON
COMPUTER
SYSTEM
LEX
ENTERTAINMENT
AIMAX
ALOMA
(NEWMEDIA)
SAMMY
SHOGAKAN
PRODUCTION
SHINKOESHA
BALLY
SOFT BANK
DATAM
POLYSTAR
TONKIN HOUSE
TOEI EMI
BANDAI
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BEC
YANOMAN
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ACTIVISION
JAPAN
SONY
MAGAZINE
MEDIA
ENTERTAINMENT
MEDIA CREATOR
YUBIAI SOFT



125, W25 200

Number

COPY FOR YOUR
SESSION

SAUL D. GLUCKSMAN

PH. D., A.T.R., NCC
MOUNT SINAI MEDICAL CENTRE, NEW YORK.

2301 PARK AVENUE, NEW YORK 10014, New York

OTHER NAMES Bradley, Thomas

OCCUPATION Accountant

PATIENT'S SURNAME Poulton

SEX Male

D.O.B. 06.26.65

ADDRESS Apt. 6b, 1054 E. 72nd Street, NY 10058, New York.

AIM

Brad - uncommunicative in repeated sessions with psychiatrist.
Referred for art therapy to aid diagnosis.

OUTCOME

Brad needed little prompting to draw - spent whole session scribbling frenetically. When asked why the demons were

Sketches depict demons. When asked why the demons were beheaded, Brad said "they had to die" or else they would kill him and the "game" would be "over".

FINAL DIAGNOSIS

The use of black suggests Brad is suffering from depression. The demons come from his PlayStation games. Brad feels worthless and depressed because he has lost every game he has ever played. (Apparently there are over 150 of them).

SIGNED

DATE 06.24.96

POULTON.B
6/24/96



SONY



DO NOT
UNDERESTIMATE
THE POWER
OF PLAYSTATION

WELCOME TO 'PLAYSTATION PLUS: THE NEXT GENERATION.' AFTER A YEAR OF EXISTENCE, WE FANCIED A BIT OF A REDECORATION. YOU'LL STILL FIND THE MOST DEFINITIVE REVIEWS, PREVIEWS, NEWS AND FEATURES OF ANY PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE, BUT THE NEW DESIGN ALLOWS US TO GO INTO GREATER DEPTH, EXAMINING EVERY ASPECT OF THE LATEST RELEASES. I HOPE YOU ENJOY THE NEW LOOK, AND LOOK FORWARD TO READING YOUR COMMENTS.

STEVE MERRETT, EDITOR

Star Gladiator



VIRGIN'S RELATIONSHIP

with Capcom goes from strength to strength, and the next fruits of the partnership brings the first appearance of *Star Gladiator* for the PlayStation. Released into the arcades early this year, *Star Gladiator* marked Capcom's first foray into the 3D arena, and pits nine characters against each other within a number of futuristic arenas. The scenario is set in the 24th century, with Earth on tenderhooks following a series of altercations with a number of alien races. To act as a deterrent from future extra terrestrial attacks, the controlling Earth Federation began work on a plasma-based weapon but the research was abandoned halfway through its development when it was learned that the man in charge, Dr Bilstein, had been using humans as guinea pigs. Bilstein was incarcerated for life, but members of the alien 'Fourth Empire' destroyed



STAR GLADIATOR FEATURES NINE CHARACTERS, FOUR OF WHOM REPRESENT EARTH'S INTERESTS, WITH THE REMAINDER SIDING WITH BAD GUY, DOCTOR BILSTEIN.

HAYATO KANZAKI



GAMOF GOHGRY



SATURN DYER



JUNE LIN MILLIAM



GORE GAJAH



RIMGAL



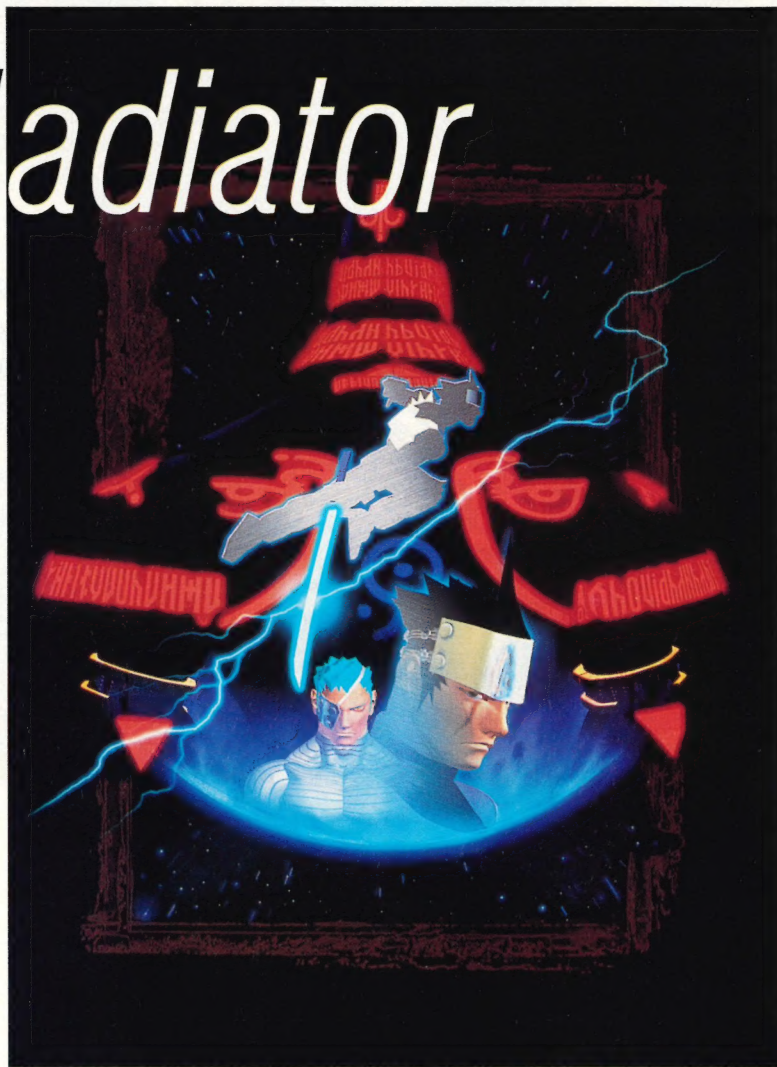
FRANCO GERELT



ZELKIN FISKEKROGEN



VECTOR (PX-02C)



Out Now
On the shelves this month...

SKELETON WARRIORS

A tired and dated platformer from Virgin. Based on the equally poor cartoon series, it'd fail to test a Megadrive's processor. Awarded 69% in *PlayStation Plus* Issue 12.



DARKSTALKERS

Granted, *Street Fighter Alpha* leaves it standing, but Capcom's tribute to the B-movie monster brigade is playable enough. Awarded 78% in *PlayStation Plus* Issue 9.





the Earth Federation's HQ on the prison planet Zeta, and guaranteed Bilstein ultimate power as their emperor if his weapon could be used to take over Earth.

As such, four of the combatants in *Star Gladiator* represent Earth's interests, while the remaining five are there on behalf of the Fourth Empire — with the obligatory boss at the end. *Star Gladiator* is a cross between *Toshinden* and *Soul Edge*, with each of the characters armed with a weapon and capable of



op board. Similarly, with Capcom at the helm, each character comes equipped with a wealth of special moves, ranging from the expected projectile bursts, to acrobatic leaps and kicks.

Initial impressions of the PAL *Star Gladiator* code are favourable. Blocking is effected via one of the face buttons which makes a pleasant change, and stringing together punches and kicks is as simple as it was in *Street Fighter Alpha* and its sequel. The gap between the arcade machine's release and this PlayStation version proves Capcom's commitment to the Sony machine, and Virgin are preparing to release the game as soon as November where it will line up with *Street Fighter Alpha 2* to take on the likes of Namco's sluggish PAL *Tekken 2* conversion.

CAPCOM'S FIRST 3D FORAY IN ACTION.



stringing together stunning combo moves to rival those of the *Street Fighter* range. Control over the characters is effected via a four button system, so the assorted hits and blocks have transferred effortlessly from the original coin-



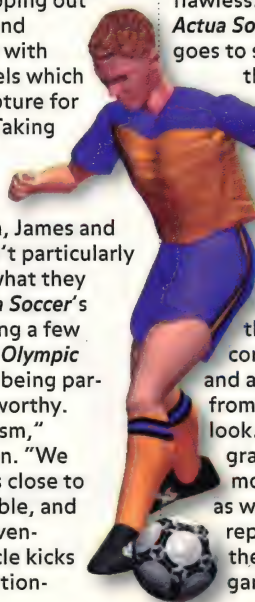
FIFA '97

DURING A RECENT visit to their Vancouver HQ, EA's Canadian division unveiled the first PlayStation shots of *FIFA '97* to *PlayStation Plus*.

With *FIFA '96* heavily criticised for its lack of speed and sluggish controls, James Johnson and his forty-strong team have gone back to the drawing board for the latest version, retaining only the virtual stadium from the first game, and stripping out all the sprites and replacing them with rendered-models which use motion-capture for extra realism. Taking a good look at the many soccer games for the PlayStation, James and his team weren't particularly impressed by what they saw, with *Actua Soccer*'s animation raising a few eyebrows, and *Olympic Soccer*'s speed being particularly note-worthy. "We want realism," offered Johnson. "We want a game as close to soccer as possible, and without the seven-foot-high bicycle kicks and limited motion-

capture cycles we've seen." *FIFA '97* is looking very impressive indeed, and one of the greatest innovations is within the motion-capture area. With Newcastle's gallic supremo, David Ginola, supplying the moves, EA have refined the system so that the action flows faster than before and that if a player interrupts a shot, the animation to the other move is flawless. For example, in *Actua Soccer* if the player goes to shoot and is tackled, the sprite still has to

follow through the movement before he can be controlled. EA's system, however, uses 'tweening' animations which allows the user both more control immediately, and also doesn't detract from the way the players look. *FIFA '97* is set to grace the cover of next month's *PlayStation Plus* as we bring you the full report of what could be the greatest soccer game yet. Again.



FIFA '97's MAIN ENHANCEMENTS ARE IN THE SPEED AND CONTROL DEPARTMENTS, WITH THE PLAYERS REACTING TO MOVEMENTS A LOT FASTER, WHILE THE GAME MOVES ALONG AT A FAIR OLD LICK.

VIRTUAL GOLF

A very simplistic and dull golf game which, when compared to *Actua Golf*, has all the playability of a bar of soap. Awarded 57% in *PlayStation Plus* Issue 10.



BLAZING DRAGONS

Another cartoon licence, but a superior point and click adventure which outdoes *Discworld*. A little clumsy, but worthwhile. Awarded 87% in *PlayStation Plus* Issue 10.



FORMULA 1

Stunning. Quite simply one of the greatest PlayStation games to date, and one which plays as well as it looks. Awarded 93% in *PlayStation Plus* Issue 11.



TOP GUN: FIRE AT WILL

Boring as hell *Afterburner* rip-off, with crappy FMV sequences apparently enough to warrant a PlayStation release. Awarded 66% in *PlayStation Plus* Issue 11.

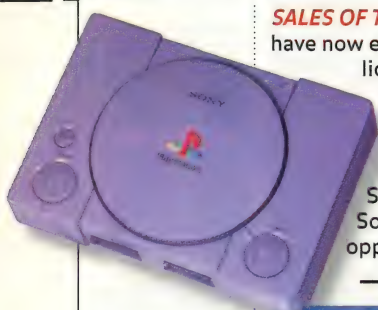


Sony break the one million barrier

SALES OF THE PlayStation have now exceeded one million machines across Europe. The news was broken at a press conference at the start of September where Sony also took the opportunity to unveil

their new television advertising campaign for the coming Christmas season. According to Sony, there are now over 300,000 PlayStations in UK homes, and they expect this number to jump considerably over the Christmas break – although they refused to confirm or deny a rumoured

price drop to £150. Sony's home-grown titles are also set to boom, with their software arm securing the licence to produce a game based on Porsche's new model, the Boxter, and *Crash Bandicoot* ready to take on the might of Sega's Sonic and Nintendo's Mario over Christmas.



OLD FAVOURITES HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE POLYGON TREATMENT.



Street Fighter Gaiden

THE NEXT STEP in the *Street Fighter* series' evolution has emerged, as Capcom show the first 3D versions of the popular *World Warriors*, including a handful of new characters. *Street Fighter Gaiden* has been developed by Arika, the company owned by *Street Fighter II* designer, Akira Nishitani, and is more of a tentative step into the third dimension as opposed to taking the likes of *Zero Divide* and *Toshinden* on directly, with the sprite characters replaced by polygon-based versions. Similarly, the action exists across forward and backward planes, with the players leaping in and out of the two to avoid

punches and attacks, which means that while the game will still be familiar to fans of the past game, we still don't get to see how a dragon punch looks in full rotational 3D. The version of code seen features seven characters, and include a guy in a black suit marked with a skeleton design called Skullomania (I kid you not), and a Dan look-alike called Pullem Prina and, as in past games, the newly-polygonised figures come equipped

CAPCOM'S TURNAROUND SPEED IMPLIES STREET FIGHTER GAIDEN COULD HIT THE PLAYSTATION BY SUMMER 1997.



with a wealth of fireball and special move attacks, along with the customary three strengths of kicks and punches – with Capcom promising a super gauge, too. Although the code on display was early, the polygon versions of Chun-Li, Ryu and Zangief looked solid and moved fluidly, although the new characters are still unknown quantities. All the same, *Street Fighter Gaiden* may not be the massive step into the third dimension fans are hoping for, but we'll reserve judgment until we see the final arcade board when it arrives later this year, with a PlayStation version said to be unveiled next year. Virgin may pick up the UK rights.



Riot

Taking a break from their wealth of vehicular-based titles, Psygnosis are trying their arm at the future sport genre with the imminent release of *Riot*. Set to take on Warner's *Pitball* (see Page 42), *Riot* is set in a circular arena within which two teams of five prepare to beat seven shades out of each other in pursuit of goals and glory. Located in the centre of the screen is a metallic saucer, and the aim of the game is to gain possession of a metal ball, power it up and slam it into the saucer – with more points awarded the further the player is from the goal. However, both teams are given a charging device which makes the spheroid glow in the team's colours, and losing possession of the ball or missing the 'goal' necessitates another recharge before a second shot can be attempted. *Riot* is a simple idea which plays at a decent speed, and the fruits of Psygnosis' look into the future will be tasted when the game arrives for review in the next month or two.

MISSING: PRESUMED LOST

Or not as the case may be. Just what has happened to those games we previewed all that time ago...

SPOT GOES TO HOLLYWOOD

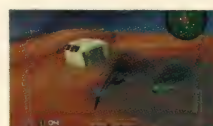
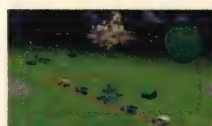
First Sighting: Issue 1 (September 1995)

Current Status: We got our first glimpse of *Spot Goes to Hollywood* in May 1995, when Virgin showed it at E3 that year. Since then, the game has popped on and off of Virgin's release schedules every now and then, and the most recently quoted date was for a Christmas release. Indeed, we also received a copy of the game in the office and it does look very nice, with all the features promised in our preview actually implemented, with Spot passing through some superbly detailed stages – and accompanied by a John Williams score to boot. Don't hold your breath, though. "Early 1997" is all Virgin will say of its proposed release date.

AFTERSHOCK

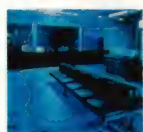
First Sighting: Issue 2 (October 1995)

Current Status: Developers Elite have retitled the game *Strikepoint*, and following interest from a number of software houses are planning to release the game themselves towards the end of October. The extra year the game has spent in development has allowed the programming team to tinker with the game's 3D engine to ensure the aerial dog-fighting is kept up to speed, and there are now nine helicopters for the player to take command of. Similarly, *Strikepoint* now sports more ground detail than before, with smooth-scrolling texture-mapped landscapes and enemy craft replacing the original polygon landscapes and vehicles.



Resident Evil 2

WITH RESIDENT EVIL now firmly established as the best selling CD game of all time (one million copies world-wide), Capcom are quick to avert claims of much laurel resting as the first shots of *Resident Evil 2* emerge. Capcom used the Tokyo show to run a three minute promo reel of the game, which appears to use the same 3D engine as the first game but with significantly more action. The as-yet-untitled sequel follows directly on from the events of the first game, with the surviving members of Alpha team returning to Raccoon City to begin an investigation into the Umbrella Corp who developed the biological mutants seen in *Resident Evil*. Two months into the investiga-



tion, when the game begins, though, Raccoon City is under siege by zombies and in true George Romero-style anyone bitten by the undead eventually joins their growing ranks. The game stars two survivors of the

zombie plague — rookie cop Leon S. Kennedy and student and motorcycle rider, Elza Walker — and the action begins in the police station where the first major addition to the original becomes immediately apparent. Controlling Leon, the player is attacked by six police-uniformed zombies at once, and if they latch on to our hero the bite marks actually show! This is down to what Capcom call their 'costume change system' which not only sees the pair change into armour and wet suits, but also means that if they blow a zombie away at close range, they'll spend the rest of the game covered in red stains! *Resident Evil 2* is being groomed for a March release in Japan, but is unlikely to see light of day in the UK for several months after.



Zero Divide 2

MORE ROBOTS, MORE MOVES, AND A BETTER CPU AI. ALL THE USUAL ENHANCEMENTS ARE MADE TO THE ZERO DIVIDE ENGINE.

ZOOM ARE NEARING completion on *Zero Divide 2*, a second outing for their robot fighters. Reusing the same 3D arenas and camera views, *Zero Divide 2* adds to the original with more robots, more moves, and general refinements to the control system. Zoom have listened to complaints regarding the sluggish controls that plagued the first game, and are now promising a faster fighter with more optimum use of the robot's on-board weaponry. Ocean snapped up the first game for a PAL release last November, but the Mancunian company have yet to confirm if the sequel will be added to their release schedule. Import versions will be available in November.



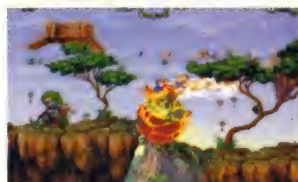
Lomax in Lemmingland

PREVIEWED BRIEFLY in our E3 report, Psygnosis now have near completed code of *Lomax in Lemmingland*. Using the same game engine as Psygnosis' 16bit sleeper, *Flink*, Lomax traverses a series of platform-laden stages avoiding dark-hued Lemmings which have been

possessed by the end-of-game baddy. Lomax is armed with spin and jump attacks, and performing one of these next to a possessed Lemming rids them of their affliction, and they scuttle off to safety. Similarly, the platform stages throw up seemingly impassable areas, but by

collecting a series of icons our hero is endowed with a series of Lemming-related skills (bridge-building, digging, etc) which are summoned from a menu which floats above Lomax's head when selected. *Lomax in Lemmingland* will be reviewed next month.

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Street Fighter vs X Men

THE SPECIAL MOVES ARE NOW A BLEND OF THOSE OF STREET FIGHTER AND X-MEN, ALLOWING FOR TRIPLE-STRENGTH FIREBALLS AND PROJECTILE ATTACKS.

CAPCOM'S continuing crusade to rule the 2D beat 'em up roost has thrown together their oddest pairing to date: the X-Men versus the *Street Fighter Alpha* gang! Set to premier as an arcade board with a PlayStation conversion hot on its heels, the originally-titled *Street Fighter vs X-Men* mixes characters from the two Capcom-developed game, and works along the same lines as Williams' *Mortal Kombat Trilogy* in that any backdrop can be selected from the two games — with Nash battling Omega Red against Chun-Li's familiar home territory. It's not the first time a *Street*

Fighter character has met the X-Men (Gouki/Akuma was a hidden character in Capcom's *X-Men* conversion), but Capcom have added fresh ideas to what could have been something very silly indeed. For example, the three-button moves of *X-Men: Children of the Atom* now apply to Ryu et al, allowing for huge fireballs similar to Cyclops' huge laser attacks! Similarly, for the first time in a Capcom game, four people can play simultaneously,

with early screenshots detailing Ryu pairing up with Cyclops against Chun-Li and Wolverine. Virgin are likely to pick up the game for the UK market, and as soon as we receive confirmation you'll read it here.



Crusader: No Remorse

HAVING PROVED rather popular on the PC, *Crusader: No Remorse* is on course for an October release on the PlayStation. Resembling Konami's *Project Overkill*, *Crusader: No Remorse* uses the same isometric view, with the player infiltrating the labyrinthian bases of the World Economic Consortium in an attempt to end their reign. Armed to the teeth with all manner of grenades and lasers, both stealth and gung-ho tactics come into play as robot sentries line up alongside less resilient but more intelligent human sentries as they try to take pot-shots at you. *Crusader: No Remorse* has been developed by Origin Systems in Texas — a team usually associated with the Ultima series of RPGs — and EA are aiming to have the game in the shops by Christmas.



Street Racer

ANNOUNCED SHORTLY after the release of *Rayman*, UBI Soft's PlayStation version of *Street Racer* is entering the final lap of its development. Originally developed by Vivid Image for the Super NES as a rival to *Mario Kart*, the PlayStation code retains the same arcade-style action, but uses the machine's impressive processing power to add a series of extras to the basic game. *Street Racer* puts the player behind the wheel of one of a number of odd vehicles (biplanes, cave-man rock vehicles, and dragsters) as a number of equally odd characters get together for what is the PlayStation equivalent of a *Wacky Races* episode. Viewed from behind the selected vehicle, the action is indeed very similar to that of Nintendo's



classic *Mario Kart*, with each character armed with a number of moves to deter overtaking and hinder the other drivers. The Sony code is currently 80% complete, and the developers at Vivid Image have added an eight-player mode without the need for two machines, with each player allocated a small window — a very brave idea, which pushes the PlayStation to its limits as it juggles the necessary graphics data. UBI Soft are planning a November release.

THE EIGHT PLAYER MODE REDUCES THE AMOUNT OF BACKGROUND DETAIL IN ORDER TO KEEP THE ACTION UP TO SPEED. THE RESULT IS VERY IMPRESSIVE TO LOOK AT, AND COULD WELL MAKE STREET RACER THE MOST INNOVATIVE USE OF THE MULTI-TAP YET.



TESTED

On Trial: The Per4Mer Steering Wheel from Home Arcade. Available now, priced £49.99.

FORMULA 1:

The *Formula 1* experience is made considerably better when used in conjunction with the Per4Mer. Steering is positive and allows for clean overtaking without the usual steering wheel resort of swinging wildly to the left and right. A superb advert for both the software and the Per4Mer itself.



THE NEED FOR SPEED:

When competing against a pad-using mate, it does seem as if the wheel gives a slight advantage and control is excellent. The game in general is never as skill reliant as *Formula 1*, but even so another fine per4rmance by the wheel.




EDGE RACER REVOLUTION:

The Per4Mer comes unstuck when dealing with Namco's racer, as the skiddy controls of the car are emphasised further as to make it virtually unplayable. The wheel is over responsive and even the slightest movement of the wheel sends the car skidding into the walls and frankly makes cornering nigh-on impossible.



OVERALL:

The Per4Mer does add more realism to driving games, and anyone envious of sit down coin-ops should take it for a spin.



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undead marines and hell-
spawned hordes in Doom.

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mutants have the mortality
rate of a cockroach and
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stories, new frighteningly
realistic graphics and new
pulse pounding music. It's
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started.

OLD SOLDIERS NEVER DIE, THEY JUST TURN INTO BLOODTHIRSTY

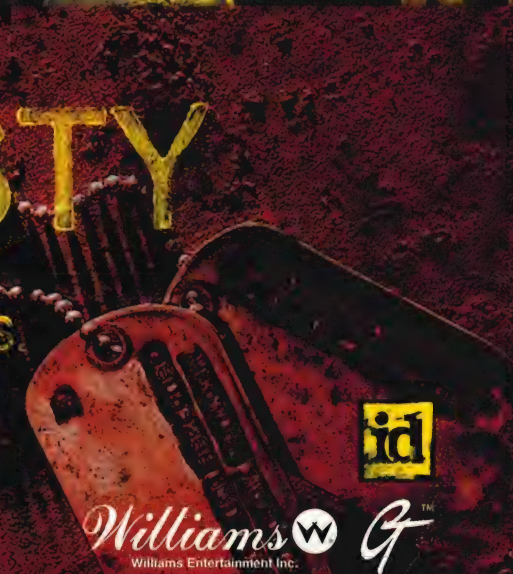
MUTANT ZOMBIES

FINAL
DOOM



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Project X2

WORMS CREATORS, Team 17, have returned to the PlayStation fold with an update of the game that brought them to Amiga prominence. *X2* is a greatly enhanced follow up to their Amiga classic, *Project X*, and is an unashamed blaster dropping the player's gun-toting spaceship into wave after wave of death-dealing aliens and equally deadly obstacles. Initially the game follows the precedent set by *Project X* and the player nego-

tiates a series of horizontally-scrolling stages, blowing away anything in their path — including boss creatures like 'they just don't make any more'. After a while, though, the view switches to that of a third-person blaster as asteroids and other hazards are thrown into the mix. Team 17 are keen to stress that there is no cerebral activity necessary when playing *X2* with the emphasis firmly on wanton destruction and the graphics geared towards generating



the best explosive seen to date on the Sony machine. Similarly we are told that all the game requires are healthy reflexes and a good strong joystick — just like in the good old days. Ocean are distributing the game for the Wakefield-based developer, and the carnage should begin in November.



A RETURN TO THE OLD VALUES, AS TEAM 17 OFFER A REAL 'MEAT AND POTATOES' BLAST.

RECOMMENDED

FORMULA 1

The most complete racing game available, with a control system that grows with the player. Mastery of manual gears around Monaco assures this Psygnosis classic in the longevity stakes.



DIE HARD TRILOGY

Yeah, yeah, three games in one and all that. But the fact that the trio are so playable keeps this riding high in our list of favourites. One of EA's finest releases to date.



BUST A MOVE 2

Acclaim have released this at long last, and at a shade less than thirty quid this is an absolute steal. A big hurrah goes out to Acclaim for the brave price decision. Now go and get one.



Wing Commander IV

THE 'VIRTUAL SCENERY' OF WING COMMANDER III IS NOW REPLACED WITH REAL SETS, MAKING FOR A MORE CONVINCING AND SOLID FEEL TO THE PROCEEDINGS.

EA AND ORIGIN have again teamed Mark Hammill and Malcolm McDowell together as *Wing Commander IV* heads for the PlayStation. Released on the PC eighteen months ago, the Kilrathi have long since gone, although a new threat has reared its ugly head. Psycho space pirates are reaping havoc throughout the galaxy, raiding key military targets and generally causing chaos across the Terran community. Enter Colonel Christopher Blair, the quiffed hero who must rid the universe of this evil along with the familiar faces of *Back to the Future's* Biff and the other TCS Victory guys. In addition to the elaborate plot, developer Origin has ditched the virtual scenery in



favour of real-life sets, giving *Wing Commander IV* a cinematic quality second to none. The action sequences and mission objectives are also more complex than those in *Wing Commander III*, making this the closest thing to interactive *Star Wars* yet. *Wing Commander IV* is not due for release until the beginning of next year though, so in the mean time you'll have to keep plugging away at those damned Kilrathi.



THE BLOCKBUSTER VIDEO CHARTS

Last month's positions in brackets.

What's tickling your fancy in your local **Blockbuster** rental store — now with added **PlayStation**.

TOP TEN VIDEO GAME RENTALS

1. (3) INT TRACK AND FIELD (KONAMI)
2. (5) RIDGE RACER REVOLUTION (NAMCO)
3. (1) DESTRUCTION DERBY (PSYGNOSIS)
4. (-) RESIDENT EVIL (VIRGIN)
5. (-) ADIDAS POWER SOCCER (PSYGNOSIS)
6. (4) TWISTED METAL (SONY)
7. (-) BATTLE ARENA TOSHINDEN 2 (SONY)
8. (-) GUNSHIP 2000 (MICROPROSE)
9. (7) DOOM (GT)
10. (8) WORMS (OCEAN)

TOP TEN RENTAL VIDEOS

1. (NE) HEAT
2. (NE) JUMANJI
3. (NE) TRAINSPOTTING
4. (1) SEVEN
5. (2) ACE VENTURA 2
6. (4) DANGEROUS MINDS
7. (3) BABE
8. (NE) JOHNNY MNEMONIC
9. (6) ASSASSINS
10. (5) LOCH NESS



TOP TEN RETAIL VIDEOS

1. (NE) 101 DALMATIANS
2. (NE) CASPER
3. (NE) BAD BOYS
4. (3) SAWN PRINCESS
5. (NE) WHY YOU WERE SLEEPING
6. (NE) JUDGE DREDD
7. (2) WATERWORLD
8. (NE) SPECIES
9. (8) VENOM SAGA
10. (9) POCAHANTAS

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**Time Commando available
this Summer on PlayStation and PC CD.**





Release : DECEMBER
 Company : GREMLIN INT.
 Price : TBA
 Players : 1 - 2
 Genre : SHOOT 'EM UP

The Decks are (Re)Loaded



A trail of guts and gore was left in the wake of Loaded. Now, after record-breaking sales, Gremlin is preparing to unleash Reloaded, bigger, badder and bloodier than before – can you stomach it?



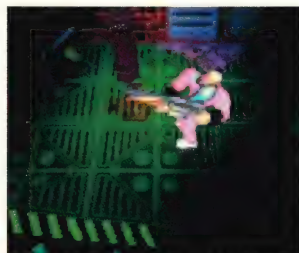
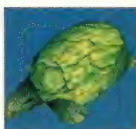
an Stewart, Chairman of Gremlin Interactive, is a very proud man.

13 years ago he ventured into the video games market by opening a small computer store in the centre of Sheffield, just as 8bit computing became the latest craze. The software industry then boomed. The ZX Spectrum and Commodore 64 went supersonic, *Manic Miner* was on the lips of every discerning school kid and the Kempston joystick beat Deely

Boppers as the latest must-have accessory.

As the popularity of video gaming rocketed skywards, Stewart made a decision that has since changed his life – he formed Gremlin Graphics, a small but promising development company that published 8bit computer games. After a blazing, albeit politically incorrect, start with *Monty Mole*, interest grew in the Yorkshire coders. Remember *Thing on a Spring* and *Way of the Tiger*? Critically acclaimed by both the public and the specialist

MAMMA IN ALL HIS RENDERED GLORY. FIRST EACH OF THE CHARACTERS WAS PAINTED BY 2000AD ARTIST JASON BRASHILL, THEN GREMLIN'S TEAM OF RENDERERS TOOK OVER.



LIKE ALL OF THE CHARACTERS IN *RELOADED*, *BOUNCA* HAS UNDERGONE A VISUAL CHANGE. NOW HE LOOKS LIKE ELVIS.

press, Gremlin soon established itself a name for producing games that were both innovative and inspiring.

But things change. Now, over a decade later, Gremlin has since dropped its original 'Graphics' epithet in favour of the more desirable 'Interactive' label, and game characters such as *Bouncer* and more recently *Zool* have long since been laid to rest. However, one thing has remained unchanged – Gremlin's resolve to produce simple but extremely enjoyable games.

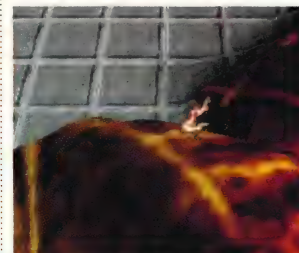
Even though the market is still in its infant stage, so far the company's PlayStation history is impressive. *Actua Soccer*, Gremlin's realistic football game, sold by the bucket-load even though the final version was bugged. Bloody shoot 'em up *Loaded* is another of the companies success stories, both in this country and across the globe, as Ian Stewart is keen to stress. "*Loaded* was our first release on the PlayStation and we're very glad it did so well. It took America by storm and to have that sort of



BOUNCA, THE STEEL-JAWED PSYCHO FROM THE ORIGINAL GAME, RETURNS FOR A BIT MORE BLOOD-LETTING IN *RELOADED*.



CYBORG NUN SISTER MAGPIE IS ONE OF TWO NEW CHARACTERS IN THE GAME. SHE'S JOINED BY FELLOW NUTTER *THE CONSUMER*.



RELOADED MAKES GOOD USE OF TERRAIN MORPHING, WHICH BASICALLY MEANS THE BACKGROUNDS CHANGE AS YOU PLAY.



impact on such a new market was unbelievable." It's true, *Loaded* was an enormous commercial success, shipping over 250,000 units in the first day. Even the Americans were mad for a taste of England, with over 100,000 copies sold in two months in the US alone – that's one in six PlayStation owners who bought a copy of *Loaded*. Impressive, I'm sure you'll agree.

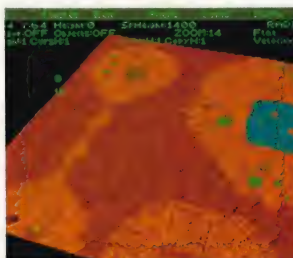
So a sequel was inevitable, surely? Well, no. During *Loaded*'s development there were no ideas for a follow up, no master plan to get the first game out fast and then concentrate on the second. Incredibly it was not until the game's popularity had been realised that plans for a sequel were discussed, and after preliminary

concept meetings, *Reloaded* was conceived.

RETURN OF FUB

The plot behind *Reloaded* follows on directly from the first game, as arch evil bloke FUB flees his bleeding corpse in search of another host. Light years later he stumbles across a barren desert moon: an under-developed wasteland, home to a handful of hippies high on life – not to mention other questionable substances. Easily overpowering the long-haired

IF IT'S ONE THING RELOADED ISN'T SHORT OF IT'S EXPLOSIONS. EACH CHARACTER IS EQUIPPED WITH A SMART BOMB WHICH NUKES EVERYTHING ON-SCREEN.



wasters, FUB possessed the body of square-jawed hunk Manuel Auto and immediately devastated the tiny trippy town before leaving to wreak his revenge.

Of course, it's not going to happen, at least not if the six anti-heroes of *Reloaded* can help it. Four of the faces will be familiar

MAMMA

Mamma's boy is back but this time he's wearing a cool blue romper suit complete with cutesy panda slippers. As lovable as ever, this giant-sized baby hugs and squeezes the life out of anything that moves as he relentlessly searches for someone man enough to change his skid-stained nappy.



appears in the game. The characters were then realised in 3D by the five-strong team of graphic artists and renderers working on the project, giving them depth and personality through animation. These 3D models were then used to create the sprites that will

eventually feature in the game, so while rendering techniques were used to bring the savage six to life, the final product relies on more traditional animation methods, which is visually as good but also saves on memory.

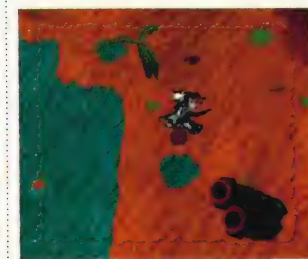
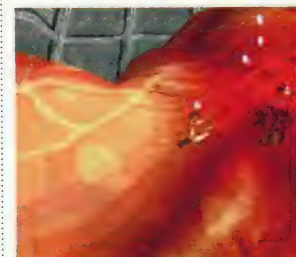
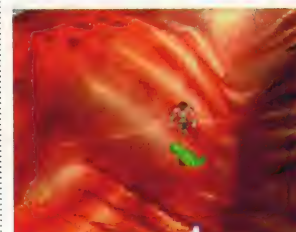
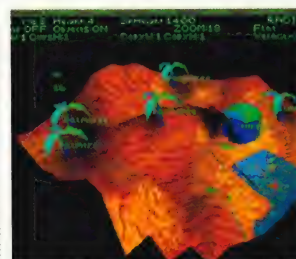
Anyway, back to the storyline. As part of his plot to overthrow humanity he's planning to 'redecorate' a

handful of planets throughout the Milky Way, transforming them into glorious works of art. However, FUB's idea of art is somewhat different from the typical Michelangelo still life – imagine a craterous moon devoid of life and you'll have some idea of FUB's ideal home. Even worse, he's mutated Manuel's body to make himself a muscular powerhouse

with owners of the original *Loaded*, as Butch, Cap'n Hands, Bounca and Mamma return to play havoc on the PlayStation. They are joined by two apprentice assassins, The Consumer and Sister Magpie. Each has been brought to life by talented 2000AD artist Jason Brashill, who painted each of the character portraits as well as a lot of the other artwork which

BUTCH

Don't be fooled by this guy's appearance. He's a cross-dresser with an attitude, having hung up his dress in favour of skimpy swimming costumes complete with mine-bomb breasts. His foul temper is only matched his appearance – has he never heard of waxing his bikini line?

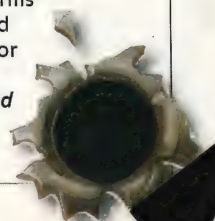


stronger than an army.

Naturally, a change of name accompanies his change of form and so now the bane of the *Reloaded* hero's lives has been re-named CHEB – Charming, Handsome, Erudite Bastard.

BLOOD LUST

Rather than being a completely new game, *Reloaded* is a true sequel – it takes the original game and improves on it, both in terms of gameplay and presentation. For example one aspect of *Loaded* Gremlin was keen to main-



SPEED KILLS

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BOUNCA

Er, ee's not da brightest bloke in da world, right, but ee punch yer lights out, okay? Yup, Bounca is still thick as pigshit but, bless 'im, there's no denying he's as strong as ten horses. Now in his Elvis stage in life, he wears a sharp suit and wields and hefty triple-barrelled gun lovingly named 'Tri-Me'. Ah, the sweetheart.



comical – the bloodshed is more akin to something like a Tom and Jerry cartoon than that of a horror flick.

BULLET POINTS

Incredibly, there is a side to *Reloaded* that isn't violent. Well, not particularly anyway.

Rather than simply fragging anything and everything, some enemies actually offer hints and tips that prove invaluable later in the game.

However, they won't offer advice for free and must be physically coaxed into talking. Enter *Reloaded*'s "shoot first, ask questions later" conversation system and key enemies won't die when shot, but instead writhe around the floor in agony. The henchmen, for that is what they are, will beg for mercy until interrogated, when they (un)happily give away the clues. It's only after they've spilt the beans that their guts meet the same

envelopes the hapless enemy in fire, causing them to stagger around screaming. After a few seconds they collapse to their knees before dying, leaving behind a smoking, charred body. Cool.

There are loads of other ways to die in *Reloaded*, all of them horribly graphic and disgustingly gory. The rocket launcher literally blows victims inside-out and sends severed arteries flying across the screen, while falling from a great height results in the character landing as a red mush with arm and legs protruding from decidedly unnatural angles.

Although violence in video games is a topical subject at the moment, with the PAL version of *Resident Evil* cut due to excessive blood and gore, Gremlin are confident *Reloaded* will escape the iron fist of the censors because the violence is a lot more



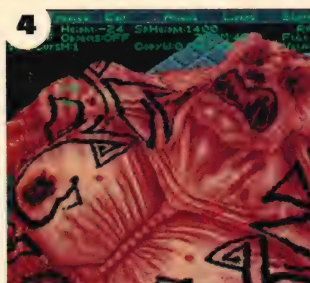
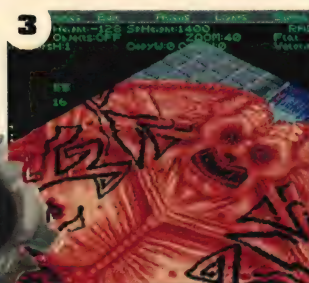
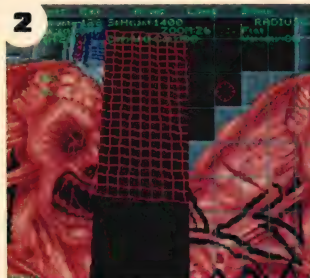
tain for the sequel was the gore level. *Loaded* was a gruesome game but the level of blood-letting has been taken one step further for *Reloaded*. As Gremlin admit, "we would like the game to seem more like *Doom* viewed from above than to be compared to *Gauntlet* again." So there's intestinal trails strewn across the ground, blood and guts spattered across the walls and untold ways to decapitate an enemy.

Take, for example, the machine gun. Pump an enemy full of lead and their body will slump backwards before exploding, hurling limbs in every direction. The plasma gun is a little less bloody, the victim enshrouded in a fine pink mist which eats the flesh from their bones, leaving behind a gleaming white skeleton that eventually slumps to the ground. My personal favourite, however, is the flamethrower, which



ON TOP OF THE WORLD

The levels in *Reloaded* are enormous. Constructed from hundreds of tiles, the flat canvas is first filled with textured blocks to create a two-dimensional map of the level. Then, using the specifically designed level editor, the canvas is given depth, by raising or lowering the individual tiles. Smooth curves are made possible by gradually altering the height of each individual tile, thus making it possible to create the distorted body of CHEB for the finale.



fate, to prevent trigger-happy maniacs from blowing away the key to success.

In addition to the obvious clues blabbed by the weaker enemies, more subtle hints are present in the form of signs. These are found throughout the game and are automatically read by standing next to them.

LEVEL READER

So it's not all guns and guts, there is a puzzle element to the game. Varying considerably in difficulty, the early puzzles are usually solved simply by slotting the right coloured key in the correct slot, thus opening up a new section of the level. Other doors can be opened in



slightly more aggressive manner, by stuffing explosives around the frame and blowing a hole in the wall.

But neither of these problems should prove a problem to even the most inexperienced player. Some of the floor puzzles are more challenging, and a number of secret codes must be learned and remembered for use later in the game.

The design of the levels makes *Reloaded* more difficult than the first game too. Although there are strictly only six in all, they are divid-

ed in individual segments which effectively amount to around 18 stages. They have more depth than the backgrounds in *Loaded* too, and now characters are free to climb onto walls and attack the enemies from a higher vantage point. These walkways also lead to hidden areas of the game and hard-to-reach teleporters, which again lead to other sections of the level.

mighty morphing

Better use of terrain morphing has also affected the

SISTER MAGPIE IS A CYBERNUN WHOSE PROGRAM CHIP HAS FUSED. NOW SHE SCOURS THE GLOBE, COLLECTING MONEY FOR CHARITY WITH THE AID OF MOTHER SUPERIOR, HER GUN!

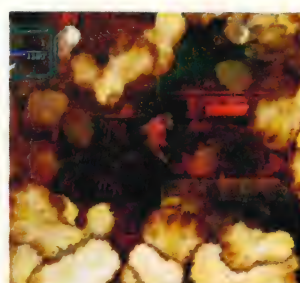
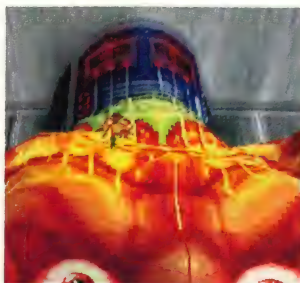


design of each level, both as features of the landscape and as a result of an attack. The tensioned floors, for example, act like rubber and therefore warp as the player walks across them. This is a neat visual touch but also it affects gameplay, with ground bombs rolling towards the lowest dint in the ground.

A better example of terrain morphing is CHEB's special attack, which emits a lethal pulse that sends ripple across the screen. The screen wob-

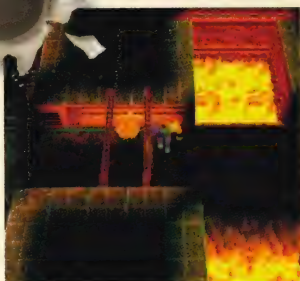
bles, the player falls to the floor and everyone gasps at the cool visual effect. Likewise, the crater attack sucks part of the ground away, leaving a gaping hole into which characters will fall unless they're quick to react.

In addition to the provoked terrain changes, there are more natural scenery obstacles. Some of the floor tiles are sticky and therefore reduce the player's agility, whirlpools drifts around the water sucking in any nearby objects and magma, which appears as the game nears



VARIETY PERFORMANCE

If *Loaded* is a bar of Dairy Milk, simple and unvaried, then *Reloaded* is a Cadbury's Selection Box, full of diversity and flavour. Where as *Loaded*'s levels were pretty much the same all the way through, a lot more effort has been made to ensure it's varied throughout. Indeed, the quest for CHEB kicks off in the desert wastelands before progressing on to an industrial hell-hole. After nuking a handful of galactic super-models in the aptly titled Campbell Clones stage CHEB moves on to the diamond monastery, causing havoc in the chapels. Next the battle moves to the high seas as the player nears chez CHEB riding the crest of wave on a huge line. As for the finale... well, let's just say it's something a little out of the ordinary.



CHEB's lair, is lethal to touch but also boils over, spurring gobs of hazardous molten rock in all directions. Other panels are electrified, sending high voltage shocks through anyone stupid enough to step on them.

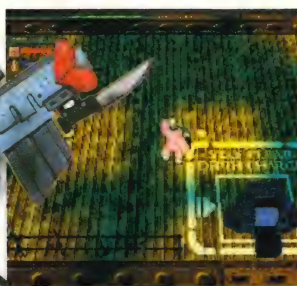
HOME IMPROVEMENTS

So Gremlin was keen to improve pretty much every aspect of *Loaded*, by creating more complex and challenging levels, polishing the presentation through more advanced visual effects, and by bumping up the gore content. However, there was one other flaw that needed to be rectified – the enemies' artificial intelligence, or rather the lack of it. In *Loaded* all of the computer-controlled opponents automatically homed in on a target, but rather than changing course to avoid obstacles or walk around walls they relentlessly bashing into the object blocking their way. All this will change in *Reloaded*. The enemies have been programmed to take advantage of the scenery, to use walls as cover and also try and catch the player in a cross-fire. There are also more of them, from bog-standard foot troops that fire weedy lasers, to sentry guns that block the ways unless destroyed using high explosives.

Background obstacles feature more heavily too, with enormous cogs

THE CONSUMER

This month's cover star and one of the new characters introduced in *Reloaded*. A man-eater with a taste for human flesh, the Consumer has metal fangs that tear easily through bone and gristle, and rocket pods surgically wielded to her athletic body – apparently she prefers her food charbroiled!



TORCH AN ENEMY WITH THE FLAMETHROWER AND THEY'LL STAGGER AROUND ON FIRE BEFORE COLLAPSING, THEIR CORPSE CHARRED TO A CINDER.

ripping into players if they stumble too close, and boiling pots of molten metal that tips and pour their lethal contents across the floor.

There are also guardians, another feature which was foolishly forgotten from *Loaded*. Admittedly most of them are CHEB in one guise or another, following his progress from man to Minotaur, but his wide range of attacks gives *Reloaded* the variety and much-needed challenge that was left from the original.

WE WANNA GET

LOADED

what else can you expect of *Reloaded* then? It's difficult to know where to begin, but let's concentrate on the better use of light-sourcing. While *Loaded* used the PlayStation transparent colour effect, *Reloaded* promises to take it to even greater heights. As a result the levels will look more dramatic, with some areas cast in darkness and others high-light with neon.

Expect more variety too. Even Gremlin admit that while the early stages of the game were up to scratch, some of the latter stages weren't exactly how they wanted them. Therefore more thought has gone into their design and appearance. Players will now venture across desert wastelands, through indus-



SISTER MAGPIE

A cybernun with a fried CPU. Rather than asking politely for money to fix the church roof, she'll rip out your intestines if you don't give kindly to a good cause!

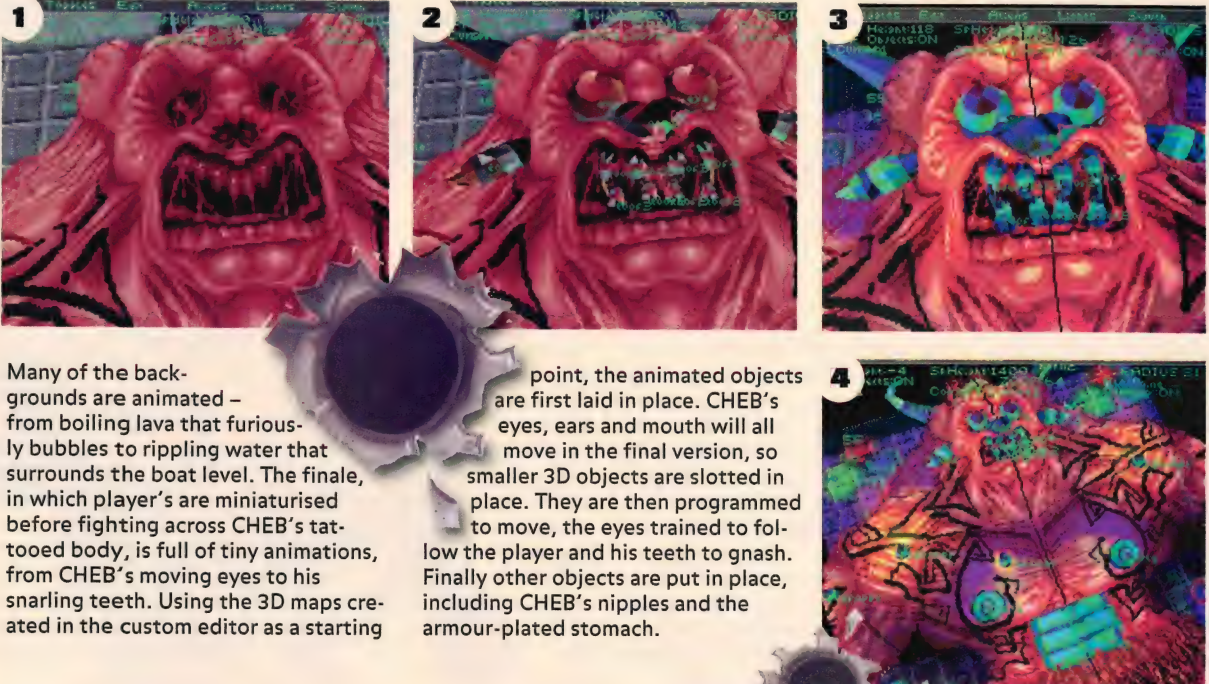
Supported by her trusty laser blaster, Mother Superior, this is one charity worker you don't want to piss off.



Apart from the actual character sprites, each of the objects is rendered in 3D. Initially designed as a wireframe object, the surfaces are then filled in. Finally the texture-maps are added et voila, one chunky tank.



RE-ANIMATED



Many of the back-grounds are animated – from boiling lava that furiously bubbles to rippling water that surrounds the boat level. The finale, in which player's are miniaturised before fighting across CHEB's tattooed body, is full of tiny animations, from CHEB's moving eyes to his snarling teeth. Using the 3D maps created in the custom editor as a starting

point, the animated objects are first laid in place. CHEB's eyes, ears and mouth will all move in the final version, so smaller 3D objects are slotted in place. They are then programmed to move, the eyes trained to follow the player and his teeth to gnash. Finally other objects are put in place, including CHEB's nipples and the armour-plated stomach.

trial mazes, inside diamond monasteries and even across the Big Drink on a whopping ocean liner. The best, though, is left for the end. Battle this far and the finale takes place on... get this... CHEB's body! Players are miniaturised and left to roam the unclean one's torso, rum-maging through his pubic hairs and blowing up his nipples with the rocket launcher! Sick...

taneous game is pretty much identical to that of *Loaded's*, but now there's the link-up option. Okay, it needs two PlayStations, two copies of the game, a serial link cable and, of course, two players, but the freedom awarded by the use of individual screens makes it worthwhile.

And then there's the music. Pop Will Eat Itself have split since *Loaded* (presumably the two are not connected) so in-house musician

Neil Biggin opted for something completely different and sonically, *Reloaded* has a drum and bass flavour, a mixture of hardcore techno and phat beats. Or something. But whether



you're into house, garage, lounge or elevator music, *Reloaded* promises one thing – action. Conceptually *Reloaded*

is simple but frantic, two things every shoot 'em up needs to be. It's also a blast. Literally...

CAP N' HANDS

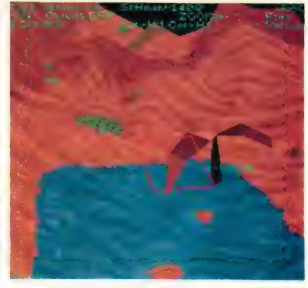
Another of the old favourites, Cap'n Hands still prefers his two flint-lock pistols over contemporary lasers. More foul tempered than ever after an accident involving the ground and a long fall from the atmosphere, this psycho is just looking for trouble...



INSIDE THE CRIMSON CAVE LOADS OF NASTIES ATTACK. DON'T PONCE AROUND, BLAST THE GITS!



THE LEVELS IN RELOADED HAVE MORE DEPTH THAN THOSE IN THE ORIGINAL. PLAYERS CAN OFTEN CLIMB ON TOP OF WALLS TO REACH OTHER PARTS OF A STAGE.



ONCE THE LANDSCAPE HAD BEEN CREATED USING GREMLIN CUSTOM-BUILT EDITOR, OBJECTS WERE THEN BE PLACED. HERE WE SEE A TREE, ERM, GROWING.

Do you want to see some Puppies?



He's back, this time on PlayStation™



and Sega Saturn™



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Release : TBA
Company : VIRGIN
Price : ETBA
Players : 1-2
Genre : BEAT 'EM UP

Street Fighter Alpha 2



STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 2 IS MORE BALANCED THAN ITS EARLIER VERSIONS, WITH THE GAME NOW EQUALISED BETWEEN THE USE OF THE SPECIAL MOVES AND ORDINARY KICKS AND PUNCHES.



If the constant rivalry between Capcom's *Street Fighter* series and Midway's blood-thirsty *Mortal Kombat* line-up has a comparison, it is probably the running feud between Premiership giants Manchester United and Newcastle. With Capcom assuming the Man U role, their *Street Fighter* series is generally revered as the greater all-rounder of the two — strong in every area and always a pretty safe bet. The Geordie Kombaters, however, should never be under-estimated and just as Capcom's grip on the beat 'em up title seems assured, Midway always waded in with an updated version of the *Mortal Kombat* engine, with new characters and moves to rival any £15 million signing.

When the *Street Fighter 2* bubble seemed about to pop, for example, up leaped Midway with a game that delivered the gore missing from the sanitised Capcom game. Straight away, Capcom duly waded in with a 'Super' edi-

tion of their game featuring new characters and a game which allowed moves to be pieced together. 2-1 to Capcom. Until a storming volley of new characters, better combos and all-new finishing moves from Midway evened the score, leaving Capcom struggling to keep above a flurry of masterful moves. Midway then surprised Joe Public with the less than eventful *Mortal Kombat 3* which, while adding more extras to the basic game, was effectively *Mortal Kombat 2.5* rather than a full-blown sequel. Still, it kept them in the lead as Capcom's defence seemingly gave up with very little new on the World Warrior front. Needless to say, in the dying minutes, Capcom pulled back with a beautiful effort called *Street Fighter Alpha* which gave them PlayStation supremacy, with its incredible graphics and speed. Now we rejoin the competition as it enters extra time.

Midway's attacking line features GT Interactive's forthcoming *Mortal Kombat*

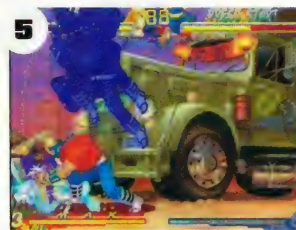
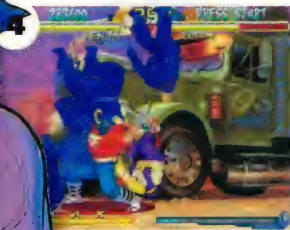
Trilogy, but in keeping with the football metaphor, the *Mortal Kombat* games have always lacked that certain something. While the Kombos (note the 'K') are every bit as good as those of the Capcom game, the many sequels have tended to lose out in terms of lasting appeal. The characters may be more detailed than the likes of Sagat and Ryu, but somehow the World Warriors have a superior air. As such, as Baraka, Sub-Zero and Kintaro flex their muscle, Capcom are preparing a fresh onslaught along the lines of 'something old, something new, something borrowed, something Ryu.'

ADDITIONS

On first sight, there doesn't seem to be a



GOUKI
(CALLED
AKUMA HERE)
IS THE BEST
ALL-ROUNDER
IN STREET
FIGHTER
ALPHA 2.



THE 'DIY
COMBO'
ATTACKS ARE
SUPREMELY
EFFECTIVE.



great deal new in *Street Fighter Alpha 2*, with minimal enhancements in the cosmetic department and a handful of new characters — and a few familiar faces from past *Street Fighter* tournaments — to keep the ardent followers of the series happy. However, *Street Fighter Alpha 2* is a game with hidden depths, and through prolonged play certain factors become apparent, enhancing the basic one-on-one bouts considerably. The beauty of the *Street Fighter* series, and a major advantage over its rivals, is that anybody can pick up a pad and string together a few punches. In the past few years we've seen hardened *Street Fighter* veterans play against novice mates only to be felled in true David and Goliath style by flukey punches and well-timed kicks. That said, such is the depth of control over the series' many combatants, that a match between two skilled players is incredible to

watch.

The first *Street Fighter Alpha* added 'Super' finishing moves to the action, along with combination attacks which sent the unfortunate on the receiving end reeling across the screen as a small counter notched up the number of consecutive hits. *Street Fighter Alpha 2* goes one better, with a stunning-looking 'DIY Combo' attack, more of which later. It is small additions like these that make *Street Fighter Alpha 2* so different from the dozens of clones emerging for the PlayStation, and as the player grows with the game, mastering the basic special moves and combo attacks needed to become a true *Street Fighter* champion, there are still lessons to be learned in turning an attack against an opponent or mastering the blocks.

LEGENDARY FACES

Following the idiom that a good sequel is one that furthers the events of the original, *Street Fighter Alpha 2* retains all the characters from the first game, and adds

another five — with others rumoured to be hidden away until a combination of button presses are discovered. Owners of the first *Street Fighter Alpha* will already be familiar with the likes of Nash, Ryu, Ken and Chun-Li, but the sequel adds five more World Warriors to the impressive cast list, with the rubber-limbed Dhalsim and Russian wrestler Zangief returning from retirement, joined by a young girl called Sakura, an old martial arts master called Gen, and Rolento, one of the bad guys in Capcom's aging *Final Fight* coin-op.

Fans of the series will already be familiar with the intricate scenario surrounding the past five games, and the on-going saga of the World Warriors continues with this latest adventure. For the uninitiated, Ryu and Sagat were drawn against each other for the final bout of the original *Street Fighter* game, and Ryu used a Dragon Punch to KO his opponent, leaving a deep scar across Sagat's chest as an indelible reminder of the defeat. By the time *Street Fighter 2*

emerged, Sagat had been recruited by a megalomaniac despot called M. Bison who, along with three other cohorts, planned to take over the world by eradicating the world's greatest fighters in a tournament arranged to prove his might. Sagat, desperate for revenge, once again met with Ryu, while the other fighters all had individual reasons for entering — Chun-Li for revenge against Bison for killing her father, Ken to win the hand of his intended, etc — and the *Super Street Fighter 2* added four new entrants all of whom were out to get even with Bison. For *Street Fighter Alpha 2*, Sakura, the game's schoolgirl entrant, is a young fan of Ryu's and consequently her moves are all based on those of her idol; Rolento is a soldier who was brought up



DAN SUMMONS FORTH HIS CUSTOM-COMBO AND PROCEEDS TO DO SOME DAMAGE TO CHARLIE.

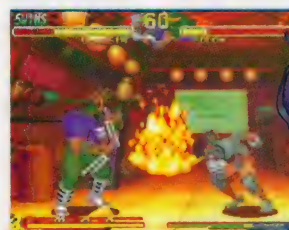
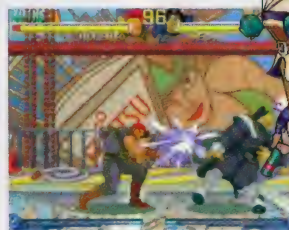
in the rough streets of the *Final Fight* game and is thus a dab hand with both grenades and more street-based lengths of pipe; while the aging Gen is a friend of the legendary Sheng Long (Ken and Ryu's mentor), whose fighting is more precise than that of the other fourteen. Finally, *Street Fighter 2* diehards Dhalsim and Zangief are back for another crack at Bison, with both claiming new moves and skills in their impressive range.

STRESS

Street Fighter Alpha 2 retains the popular six-button approach, with the face and shoulder buttons used to effect punches and kicks of three strengths. The controls can be reconfigured to any combination, and *Street Fighter Alpha 2* now benefits from 'three kick' and 'three punch' moves which are effected via the L2 and R2 buttons, and make the 'Super' moves considerably easier to effect. The *Street Fighter* series are famed for their instinctive controls, but *Street Fighter Alpha 2* is quite simply the best Capcom have produced yet. Each charac-

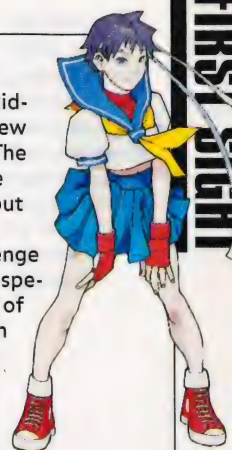


THE NEW BREED



SAKURA

Sakura is a fifteen year-old schoolgirl who was kidnapped by Bison's agents as a guinea pig for a new chemical weapon the evil tyrant is developing. The drug, code named Project 740610, enhances the physical capabilities of even the weakest user, but Sakura escaped midway through the planned course, and immediately set about plotting revenge against Bison. Using Ryu as her model, Sakura's special moves and abilities are very similar to those of the *Street Fighter* veteran, and is armed with variants on the age-old Dragon Punch and Fireball moves — all of which are effected in the same manner as Ryu's.



ROLENTO

Cuban entrant, Rolento, was one of the many opponents Mike Haggar faced during Capcom's *Final Fight* coin-op, and was once a member of Sodom's (one of the game's sub-bosses) street gang. Rolento later enlisted in the army and spent six years in service — and his training has thus endowed him with more special moves than any other character. Rolento is armed with a piece of heavy piping which he twirls like a cheerleader, and is also a master of knife-throwing and grenade usage. On defeating an opponent, the victorious Rolento casually tosses a grenade on to their unconscious form, blowing them up to make sure their challenge is ended.

GEN

A 68 year-old martial arts master, and close friend of *Street Fighter* legend, Sheng Long. Gen's history is one tainted with death and law-breaking. Orphaned when young, Gen fell into a life of crime where his quiet but calculating style led him into the world of the assassin. Eventually, Gen betrayed his Triad paymasters and, after wiping them out, turned his back on his criminal life. Since then, he has fought evil where ever he sees it, and Bison's plans for world domination have made him Gen's next target. A classic all-rounder, Gen's many special moves and yoga-based techniques makes him one for the true *Street Fighter Alpha 2* player.



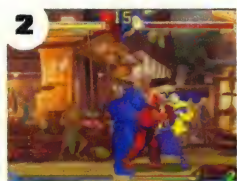
DHALSIM

Returning with more moves, Dhalsim's ability to extend his limbs is due to his ability to dislocate his joints, although his long-range punches and kicks are effective and the player can now control the length of his range. All his old Yoga favourites, such as Flame, Blast and Teleport return, with each move fine-tuned so that Dhalsim isn't so vulnerable after using each one. However, the extended range of his punches and kicks means that the Indian entrant isn't so effective during the specialised combos, but conversely is great at fending them off.

ZANGIEF

A firm favourite in *Street Fighter 2*, Zangief was spotted in a brawl and duly recruited to be part of a special Russian strike force. In keeping with Capcom's cross-pollination between games, Zangief's wrestling style is based on that of *Final Fight* hero, Mike Haggar, making the colossus ideal for close contact fighting. All his old *Street Fighter 2* moves are retained for his *Street Fighter Alpha 2* debut, with fans of the series bound to recognise his spinning attacks and heavy-handed dives. His bulk gives him a powerful punch, too, but as in past *Street Fighter* games, Zangief is at a loss when projectile attacks are used against him, proving his size is in direct contrast with his IQ.

BEFITTING HIS SPECIAL CHARACTER STATUS, GOUKI/ AKUMA'S FINISHING MOVE IS MORE VISUALLY IMPRESSIVE THAN THOSE OF THE OTHER ENTRANTS.



ter is equipped with six or seven special moves each, with old favourites like Ken and Ryu's fireballs and Dragon Punches mingling with Rolento's pipe twirling abilities, and Gan's 'Hundred Fist Strike' which brings back happy memories of E. Honda and his similarly-titled slaps. Granted, such moves can also be found in the *Mortal Kombat* series and the many SNK *Fatal Fury* or *Samurai Shodown* titles, but every move in *Street Fighter Alpha 2* can be countered, every punch or fireball blocked, while the aforementioned blocks and counters can also be breached. As such, while *Street Fighter* novices (surely a rare beast indeed) can jump in like the aforementioned David/Goliath scenario and pull off all the moves listed in the instruction manual with ease, the more *Street Fighter Alpha 2* is played, the more can be learned for future use. One of the benefits of Capcom's continual tinkering with the *Street Fighter* engine is that the modifications are always to the benefit of the game. Earlier versions were criticised for the lack of mid-jump moves, so now Akuma can drop fireballs mid-jump, while throws or blocks can also be effected mid move to



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limit the times when a player is vulnerable to attack.

Everything in *Street Fighter Alpha 2* is considerably easier to effect than before, but the said combos are the icing on the cake. With every punch or kick that lands home, a yellow bar below the player's on-screen alter ego is gradually filled, and can be topped up three times. With the bar glowing and ready for use, pressing a combination of punch and kick buttons kick starts a timed combo attack, during which the player can string together fantastic strings of kicks, punches and special moves — while the speed of the attack is emphasised by a series of shadows following the assault. This new addition to the *Street Fighter* legend works beauti-

fully, and makes for moments when gloating and general smug behaviour is essential.

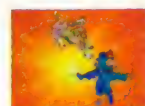
MOBES

In keeping with the general theme of user-friendliness, *Street Fighter Alpha 2* is generous to a fault with its options. In addition to the basic battle scenario, practice and versus modes allow the player to control any character and play any opponent using any of the game's backdrops. Similarly, *Street Fighter Alpha 2* boasts eight difficulty levels, and eight speed levels — with the fastest ridiculously fast. Virtually every aspect of the game can be tinkered with, although Capcom are infamous for adding dozens of secret sections to their games (a change of clothing in *Resident Evil*, for example), and this extends to combos which allow the user to alter the colour of their character's clothes, making for

purple-clad Kens, a distinctly off colour Sagat, and Akuma discarding his famed black outfit for a nice cream number. And if these sartorial shenanigans weren't enough, *Street Fighter Alpha 2* is rumoured to contain more hidden characters, including a version of Chun-Li wearing her *Street Fighter 2* garb, a more powerful version of Akuma, and a good all-rounder called Dan. Dan is in fact a little dig at SNK's *Street Fighter* rivals, and his many moves have all appeared in one form or another in past *Fatal Fury* or *World Heroes* coin-ops. There are also tales of a black-clad crossbreed of Ryu and Akuma known only as 'Evil Ryu'...

THE PAL VERSION

The Japanese version of *Street Fighter Alpha 2* went on sale in the middle of August, and while Virgin have confirmed they will be handling the PAL version, a proposed November release has yet to be confirmed. Our preview is based on the Japanese code, but we felt that reviewing this code would be premature. There's no doubting that interest surrounding Capcom's latest beat 'em up epic is high, and a secondary preview will follow when Virgin receive PAL code and can give us an indication of a release date on these shores.



WISH YOU WERE HERE...



As ever, *Street Fighter Alpha 2* takes the player across the globe, attempting to topple Bison. Each character has a backdrop, and these include a number updated from past games, along with new additions including the inside of a mens' toilet, Akuma's cavern base, and a building site lift. In keeping with the series' ongoing scenario and character information, Capcom have also incorporated two hidden play areas — Australia and Venezuela. According to *Street Fighter* mythology, Australia is destined to be the final battleground between Ryu and Sagat's grudge match, while Venezuela offers a similar confrontation as Charlie meets Bison.



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IF IT'S IN THE GAME,
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ANDRETTI RACING

Guts 'n' Garters



**(ABOVE)
LORKS!
AN EXTREMELY
UNSEEMLY
BUNCH AND NO
MISTAKE. THE
TWO AT THE
FRONT ARE
GUTS AND
GARTERS
THEMSELVES,
AND THE CHAP
BESIDE THEM
IS GENERAL
WORT, THE
BAD GUY.**



here have been some stupid names for video game characters in the past, but surely Hank "Guts" Carter and Stacy "Garters" Pringle (God knows how they got their nicknames) take the biscuit. With a host of daft-named heroes adorning the video hall of fame (although it has to be said that Conrad Hart, Ken Masters and Jill Valentine aren't all that hot), it now falls to Ocean to provide suitably silly monikers to their latest sprite creations,



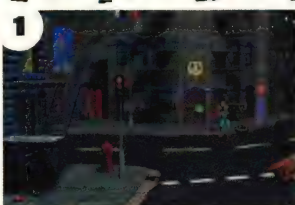
as they take on the might of *Time Commando* and countless past military-based action games in a stunning-looking assault on yet another megalomaniac's base.

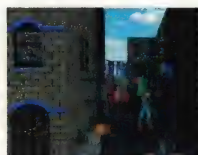
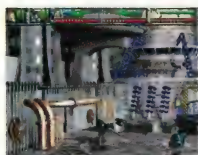
Basically, *Guts and Garters* is a cross between *Commando*, *Green Beret*, the aforementioned *Time Commando* and *Cabal* —

which, considering both *Beret* and *Cabal* were released through Ocean several years ago, makes this a bit of a trip down memory lane for the Mancunian developer — and as you can guess from the list of influences, it involves blowing things up and killing people. This time it is filmed in



Release : 1997
Company : OCEAN
Price : £TBA
Players : 1
Genre : ARCADE





'Terrainamation', which means it's in 3D.

Terrainamation is a specially developed graphics system apparently, which the developers, Magic Canvas, are rather proud of. According to Ocean's development managers, the technique allows for up to 256 planes of depth, thus enabling characters to walk around scenes. Whereas, for instance, *Time Commando* left the player to wander a preset path, every aspect of *Guts 'n' Garters* backdrops is interactive and can be walked past, blown up or entered. Fancy graphical techniques aside, it has to be said that *Guts 'n' Garters* looks like being a bit of a corker. The reason for the multi-level carnage (in 3D) is an attempt to find proof that the ever-present mutant super soldier who acts as the game's final 'boss' is being created on an island owned by a renegade General out to seize control of the world. And then you must escape.

So far other details are scant, and the code is ➡



THESE PICTURES SHOULD GIVE YOU A FAIR IDEA OF HOW THE GAME WILL TURN OUT.

BINARY WAR: A HISTORY

It all started with *Battle Zone*, the Atari wireframe classic. The first 3D game in the world debuted in the early Eighties and started a progression that now gives us *Guts 'n' Garters*. The addition of 3D backdrops which could be interacted with came in 1983 when Ultimate Play the Game's *Knight Lore* was released for the Spectrum, and numerous clones and enhancements have graced every home system since then. Out of the many variants on the Ultimate theme, System 3's *The Last Ninja* on the Commodore 64 a few years later was one of the greatest step forwards, mixing elements of the beat 'em up genre with the usual arcade/adventure elements. Since then, we have seen cross pollinations of virtually every genre, and after years in the wilderness, it seems as if the *Commando/Green Beret* clone is finally about to be brought bang up to date courtesy of Magic Canvas.

BLOW 'EM TO SQUID SPIT

IN THE HUNT



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THIS IS A SEQUENCE OF SHOTS SHOWING ONE OF THE MANY PRE-RENDERED SCENES IN THE GAME. WHEN IT'S FINISHED THERE WILL ALSO BE BACKGROUND ANIMATIONS.



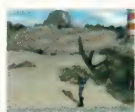
still at a very early stage, with a roughly 40% build up and running. So let's turn the spotlight of interrogation on the creators. Have they created a Frankenstein's monster, or have they made a decent PlayStation game?

INTERESTING AND STOCKINGS

Magic Canvas are the culprits responsible for *Guts 'n' Garters*, and creators of the dubiously nicknamed special agents of the title. In a typically unusual scenario, our heroes have parachuted on to an island where reports indicate a mad Admiral, the attractively-named Wort, is creating a biological super-creature — and the guinea pig undergoing conversion is a mate of the two Gs. The game follows the story of Guts and Garters as they rescue their friend and defeat Admiral Wort, from the initial peaceful exploring of the island to the climactic pitched battle inside a volcano. Guts is a battle-hardened ex-marine, and Garters

is ex-CIA.

Despite the obvious links to the likes of *Commando* and *Green Beret*, Magic Canvas were heavily influenced by games like EA's *Crusader: No Remorse* and Capcom's seminal *Resident Evil*. The action takes place across a series of flick-screen shoot 'em up stages (although plans are already under-way for a fully scrolling sequel),



GRAPHIC VIOLENCE/VIOLENT GRAPHICS

In charge of *Guts 'n' Garters'* impressive rendered backdrops and sprites is Magic Canvas' senior graphics artist, Steve Drydale. All the scenes in *Guts 'n' Garters* are painstakingly ray-traced, with every object given a light-source and rendered in real time. In order for the characters to be able to interact fully, each screen is mapped out as a 3D object, with the assorted buildings dropped in as secondary objects. We asked Steve about what must be his most ambitious work to date. "Everything feels like it's actually there," Steve says of the system, "and you can even trip on little stones." So, bearing in mind Ocean's grandiose claims, will the final version be as interactive as stated. "Everything can be blown up, and the flamethrower can scorch and set fire to things. Similarly, the bullets can chip away bits of the scenery." Needless to say, with such attention to detail, it is one of the smaller touches that Steve is proudest of. "You can leave footprints in the sand, and the water splashes when you fall in it," he states, like the father of a new child.

with the pair wasting anything and everything in their path. There are two systems of controlling your character, one of which includes a lock-on target. Rather than rotating your character as in *Resident Evil*, Guts and Garters move in the direction you press on the joypad, and such is the said interaction that, when the landscape is undulating rather than flat, progress up hills is slow while the sprites move faster trotting down them. Each level is crammed with buildings and

similar objects, and there are also ladders to climb to different rooms or areas. In all, the game features some 122 locations. These are supplemented by 600 incidental background animations, 3000 individual sound effects, and nine weapon styles, including heat seeking missiles to take out enemy helicopters and mines with a remote detonating system. Everything a would-be soldier of fortune could want, in fact, and that includes secondary skills and objects including gas masks



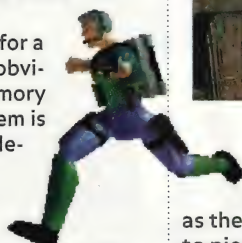
3



to fend off enemy gas attacks, hand to hand combat, helicopter flying, a beacon to call a massive Hercules jet bombing raid (which also drops bonuses), a rotor-bladed jet-pack and fully motion-captured graphics.

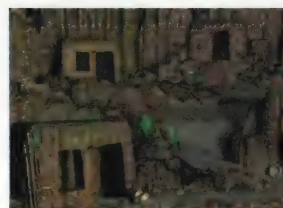
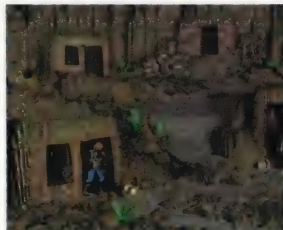
The very clever monster AI means that no game is the same twice, and the team reckon it would take ten days continuous playing to find all the secrets and finish the game.

Thankfully, for a game of such obvious size, a memory card save system is also to be implemented.



LUNGS AND BICYCLE CLIPS

Despite the levels of carnage the game allows, an element of care is needed as Admiral Wart is holding several civilians hostage. Admittedly, killing hostages isn't exactly PC, but Magic Canvas have yet to implement a penalty system for doing so, and the sick sods are tinkering with the idea of making them expendable! In keeping with the high level of scenic and character interaction aimed for, though, one neat touch is that the many enemy hordes can kill each other with stray shots, which can prove particularly entertaining if Guts or Garters get caught in a



crossfire scenario. At times the action gets utterly frenetic, and as the backdrops get blown to pieces in the heat of action, the movement of objects means that there is less room for the gun men to manoeuvre in.

The game is being developed simultaneously for a PlayStation and PC release, and the Sony code boasts a two-player mode over its PC counterpart, with both characters on the same screen — effectively doubling the possible carnage. There is also the slight possibility of a tie-in cartoon.

Guts 'n' Garters is currently heading for a Christmas/New Year release, and a full review ought to appear within the next couple of issues of *PlayStation Plus*.



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Final Fantasy VII



ou're looking at the game most likely to have secured PlayStation's continuing success in Japan. And, if our eyes and ears serve us correctly, a title capable of dissolving any lingering doubts about PlayStation as the only choice for the West. Number seven in a series which used to be exclusively for Nintendo is destined, exclusively, for the Sony platform. Sayonara N64.

Christmas '95 was a worrying time in Sony's home territory, as Sega lured customers with *Virtua Fighter 2*; viewed as the first real 'must have' game since the advent of 32bit. Nintendo failed to make Christmas, which must have been something of a relief. Everyone had until April to wait for an equivalent PlayStation blockbuster in the guise of *Tekken 2*, leav-

ing Capcom's mighty *Biohazard* holding the fort. Then, in late February this year, it happened: Square-soft announced *Final Fantasy VII* for the PlayStation. Nintendo 64, touted as the machine which would convince users that CD-ROM is a mistake, was judged incapable of supporting the project. That simple action has spoken louder than words, and in volume. Since the announcement, PlayStation sales have increased significantly, from being neck and neck with Sega to almost doubling their competitor's sales week on week in Japan. Nobody is underestimating the import of Square on the PlayStation. To quote one Japanese magazine journalist: "The change in Square's platform is so significant it may shake up the power map of the whole industry".

ROLL OVER

Since the series began on the NES in December 1987, *Final Fantasy* has come to signify innovation of gameplay and presentation. What these games are essentially about

(RIGHT) SPELLS PLAY A HUGE PART IN FINAL FANTASY VII. HERE AERITH CASTS AN IMPRESSIVE ATTACK IN WHICH A HUGE SEA DEMON CRASHES DOWN ON THE ENEMY, WASHING THEM AWAY IN A MASSIVE ROLLING TIDAL WAVE.



is exploration of exquisite locations, and partaking in grand scale battles. From this combination complex stories emerge, and dramatic incidents occur. Even before *Final Fantasy* made the transition from pixels to polygons, it can be said that the gameplay has always been three dimensional compared to pure action titles such as *Street Fighter*. What *Final Fantasy* offered initially that Enix's *Dragon Quest* did not is a genius twist to the tale, and a masterful working of the battle system. Plus the addition of a vehicle – the flying boat – opened new possibilities. These elements, revised and augmented across almost ten years, have enabled one of the finest series of games ever to be produced. It's just

a pity they weren't promoted well enough in our hemisphere. But a new ambassador, in the shape of the PlayStation, is difficult to ignore, especially when it is heralding the most spectacular game in its forthcoming catalogue. The sample disc supplied with *Tobal No. 1* (reviewed last issue) has enabled us to savour a taste of what is to come from Japan this December.

FIGHTING THREESOME

The three central characters to feature in the playable sample are those who were first shown when news of *Final Fantasy VII* first broke in February: Cloud – a young, fair-haired fighter who possesses some magic; Barret – the burly hired hand whose

Release : JUNE
Company : SQUARESOFT
Price : TBA
Players : 1
Genre : RPG



objective. In this sample Barret is only used theatrically to support Cloud – he is seen to return after looking for a way into the city, and later postures humorously to demonstrate his bravado. In Field scenes we get to learn about a character's background, which may help us solve the even bigger mystery.

BATTLE COMMENCES

right arm is half chain gun; and Aerith – comparatively weak but a beautiful magic user, who now seems key to the plot, as she features in the game's awesome opening sequence. This balance is typical of that found in a *Final Fantasy* party. A player's success depends on how well these elements are made to work together. This differs according to whether the team is exploring in field (towns, etc) scenes, or doing battle. Field scenes usually only involve one character, who represents the whole team. Sometimes in previous *Final Fantasy* games, a party member will be recognised by somebody important, which may lead to a temporary excursion from the main

This entire preview could be dedicated to the battle system, it's that important to the success of *Final Fantasy VII*. With each new RPG that Square produce, they introduce a cleverly revised battle system. This is because the battle system governs much of how characters develop their strength and magic power, to the point where they are ready to confront the final guardian, or Boss. Just as the plot needs to be original, so does the battle system. For example in the recently released *Ludora* for the 16bit Nintendo, characters may invent their own magic attacks simply by inputting made up, random words, which may then be stored if considered useful. *Romancing Saga 3* boasts characters who suddenly think of a new technique to



try during battle, which must be practised to perfection for it to reach full potential. In *Final Fantasy VI* (*Final Fantasy III* in the US) one of the heroes is able to work greater damage if the player inputs a *Street Fighter*-style command on the controller. It all gets very involving, and to an untrained eye may all seem quite similar, but to fans of this type of game these nuances are essential.

LIVE ACTION RPG

One of the features to have been carried over to *Final Fantasy VII* from *Final Fantasy VI* is the Active Battle Gauge. This governs the speed at which fighters – friend or foe – recover after making an

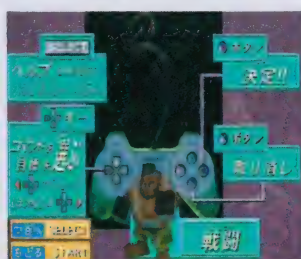
attack. The speedier their recovery time, the sooner they can make another move. In *Final Fantasy VII* this feature is optional, though it is far more exciting left on. And is exactly what Square considered the best idea for this sample disc. The exciting new addition is the Limit Gauge, which draws its power from the number of attacks the relevant fighter has made – similar to the Super Combo Level Gauge in *Street Fighter Alpha*. Once the gauge is full, the associated character is imbued with a temporary extra special ability, tailored to each personality: Barret's gun arm fires a Heavy Shot; Cloud performs a Thunder Strike with his

(BELOW) FINAL FANTASY VII OPENS WITH A BREATH-TAKING RENDERED SEQUENCE WHICH PANS ACROSS A BLEAK CYBER-PUNK CITYSCAPE. IT'S SHORT BUT, BY GOD, IT'S BRILLIANT.



CLOUD CONTROL

Like *Resident Evil* (but on a much grander scale of course) the locations in *Final Fantasy VII* are fixed perspective, and feature only small amounts of animation to inject life: steam clouds; extractor fans; neons flashing. Cloud is moved using the direction keys, and is able to run if the X button is held. To talk and manipulate objects requires the O button. Battles are upon you without warning – the enemy is invisible until they attack. While some people prefer a system where enemies are seen wandering about, this one is more thrilling as you must be prepared at all times. Currently it is not possible to view battle scenes from any angle, though it is believed likely given that all battle scenes are generated as real time 3D polygons.



On the sample disc, Barret's set-up screen explains how to accept or cancel commands.



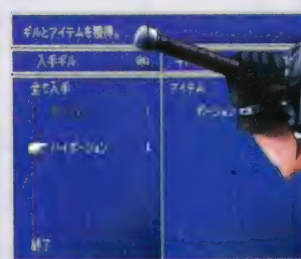
A nice touch here is being able to rotate the Cloud model using L1 and R1.



Barret's chaingun makes short work of tougher enemies, such as this hell hound.



Sometimes the viewpoint zooms in on the action, to highlight the cool animation.



This screen is full of Japanese text indicates what potions the team is carrying.



More Japanese text (sorry). In this case detailing character information – experience, etc.





sword; and Aerith heals the whole party restoring their health points to maximum.

POWER EXTREME

Health restoration is only a small example of the magic powers exhibited. Both Cloud and Aerith are custodian of incredible arcane secrets, ready to unleash them in times of extreme danger. Cloud has a selection of elemental attacks at his disposal, typically adopting the form of lightning which strikes from above. Aerith crystallises the enemy as standard, though she has one tactic in reserve which almost defies description: the Leviathan. This spell requires most of the young magi's power to conjure, and sees Aerith disappear before we witness a huge sphere of magical energy take form behind the heroes' ranks. The sphere shatters to reveal the Leviathan, resplendent with ancient markings and writhing antennae. After emitting a piercing cry, the Leviathan summons a tidal wave to wash over the enemy. All those who are susceptible to its power die instantly. It's awesome!

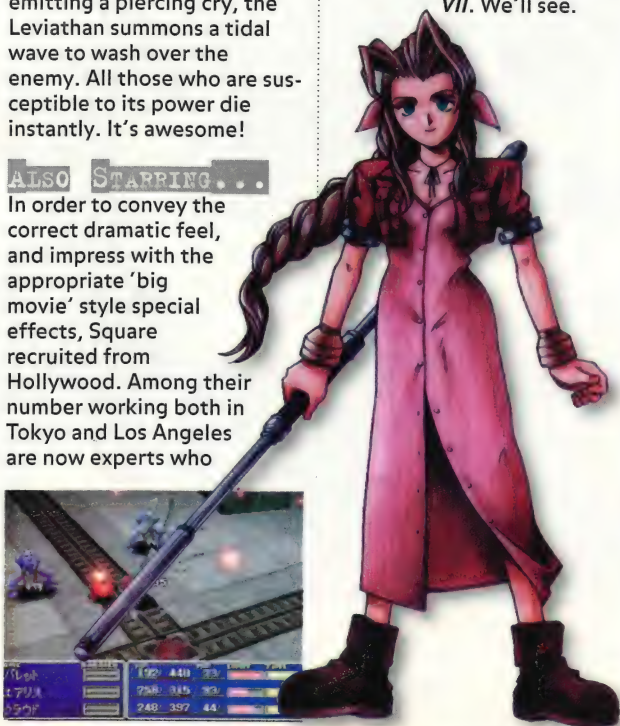
ALSO STARRING...

In order to convey the correct dramatic feel, and impress with the appropriate 'big movie' style special effects, Square recruited from Hollywood. Among their number working both in Tokyo and Los Angeles are now experts who

once belonged to Digital Domain (*True Lies*, *Terminator 2*), and Lucasarts ILM (*Jurassic Park*, *The Abyss*, *Star Wars...*). Told you this was spectacular, right!

SQUARE AND SONY PENDING

As you may already know, Square are publishing their games through Sony in Japan and America, starting with *Tobal No. 1* this Autumn. We are sure most people reading this would consider it a shame if Sony and Square were not considering *Final Fantasy VII* for an English language translation. This is highly likely considering that half the work on *Final Fantasy VII* is being handled by Square LA, who turned around an English language *Final Fantasy VI* within a few months of the Japanese release. Possibly this might mean that the two versions were developed simultaneously. The same could be happening with *Final Fantasy VII*. We'll see.



FFVII SAMPLE DISK

In case you haven't had the opportunity to play through the *Final Fantasy VII* sample here's a brief run of events:



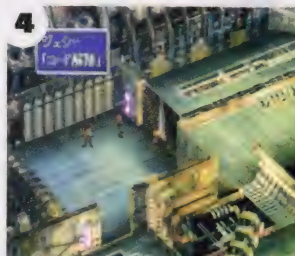
Cloud and Barret arrive by train at the impressive magical city of Midgar.



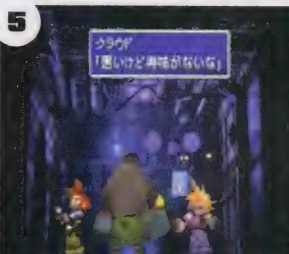
They make their way to the North gate, where accomplices help them break in.



Fights breakout in the energy plant grounds. The sign flashes "Warning! Intruder!"



Once inside the plant Cloud and Barret encounter more locked gates.



After taking a lift to the lower level, the search for the main generator begins.



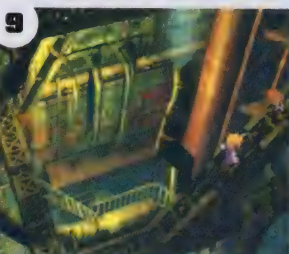
Cloud descends the steps and crosses the pipes to reach his destination.



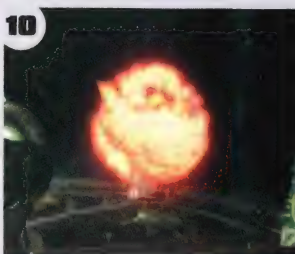
The Boss! players require all their wits to ensure the team's survival!



Once the boss is defeated there are just three minutes to escape. Run!



On the way back, Cloud must rescue his fallen friend or else get trapped himself:



Now, all they have to do is flee from the generator before it explodes...

"PlayStation?"



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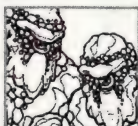
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FROM EARLY ON IN PITBALL'S DEVELOPMENT, CHARACTER SKETCHES WERE DRAWN UP THAT REMAINED VIRTUALLY UNCHANGED THROUGHOUT.



Imagine being a long way into the future, where each planet in the galaxy hosts rounds of the violent basketball-like sport known as *Pitball*, and two combatants from each world struggle to survive the match and win glory for their respective

Release : OCTOBER
Company : WARNER INT.
Price : £44.99
Players : 1-4
Genre : SPORT

homeworlds. Transported to whichever world and climate has been selected for them, they must not only fight the opposing team for possession of the energy sphere that doubles as the ball, but often cope with temperatures and environments totally alien to them. The courts are, as the name suggests, specially dug out pits into which the play area has been set. Once inside, your team must gain points by a variety of moves which not only utilise the various

power-ups that appear after certain moves, but block the opposing team from scoring. The game is just as much tactical and defensive as it is hard action and offensive.

This is the basic premise for Warner's new *NBA Jam* meets *Mortal Kombat*-style game where up to four people strive to gain control of the ball and lob it, squash-style, into tiny energy nodules. Depending on the angle and ferociousness of your shot, different points can be gained and the type of

power-ups available can be predetermined.

Based in their Manchester offices, the Warner's team have been working on *Pitball* for the best part of eighteen months, determined to create a game that has no obvious peers in the PlayStation arena. One of the few games to be exclusively designed for the Sony machine, it offers three angles of gameplay, a large cast of characters and the opportunity to move from hard and fast action gaming to the

Pitball



THE PREMIERE DIVISION

The combatants come from twelve different planets, each with their own individual skills and attributes.

THE ASTARIANS

Hailing from the fourth moon of Aldebaran, these two youngsters, Jazz and Funk, are seen as highly rebellious by the rather straight-laced Elders. Many hours spent illegally skimming around their cities, dodging the security enforcers, has meant that, despite their youth and size, Jazz and Funk are formidable opponents with a good array of special moves.



THE SLORILLIANS

Very little is known about the planet Slithmire except that only the strongest of creatures can survive within its atmosphere. Blubba and Grunge are made up entirely of mud and stone, providing them with the ability to spew rock and lava from their bodies. Their deeply superstitious background makes them protective and instinctively hostile towards aliens.



THE AUROREANS

The vast planet Borealis mixes traditional culture with modern cloud-scraping buildings and industries. Ancient religions and a hi-tech society co-exist and indeed, *Pitball* originated on the planet. Speedstar and Ash have not only inherited the skills of the games' originators, but possess their spirits – an advantage they freely use against other combatants.



THE HUMANS

The Earth of this time period is recovering from the massive damage caused by a asteroid colliding with the planet. The place is now one huge battlefield for the lawless and destitute. The rich companies and high society people live in colonies on the moon. Meli and Sarah are two anti-riot marines whose expertise in weaponry makes them ideal *Pitball* players.

THE BOOTY

The arcade game offers a variety of additional pick-ups and powers, most of which will just materialise when the tournament is underway. Some of these stay in the arena until they have been utilised, others fade away. Some if the items worth looking out for include the three types of boots. A green pair of boots help your grip on the ground of planets you may not be used to. They can also help running and jumping. Blue boots are shield boots and, unsurprisingly, help keep out bombs, mines, laser blasts and other distractions, such as over zealous opponents. The red boots are rocket boots, increasing speed and manoeuvrability. There are similarly coloured gloves as well – remarkably, blue gloves have the same effect as blue boots, and like the footwear, fade shortly after use. Green gloves make targeting your powered-up sphere towards the goal far better while red gloves are great in a punch-up. One thump from a red glove not only stuns the other guy, but drastically reduces his energy. Hit him again, and he'll probably need a medikit rather urgently.

These medikits restore your energy, depleted both



through exertion during the match and as a result of body contact or weaponry from the opposing team. Other items include mines and bombs. Mines explode on contact with a player (so don't rush towards one) but tend to



defuse if unexploded after a few seconds. Not so the bombs, which can be chucked at someone if you're quick enough. It has a built-in timer, guaranteed to explode, and you want to be as far away as possible when it



does. Orbs should be collected because once you have three of them, you can activate your Super Special Moves. Be warned, this can only be done once and then they vanish, so don't waste the combo.

INTRODUCING THE CHARACTERS THAT MAKE UP THE TEAMS ARE SOME FMV SEQUENCES. LEARN ABOUT THEIR HOME-WORLDS, THEIR BACK-GROUNDS AND JUST HOW UNPLEASANT A BUNCH THEY REALLY ARE.



THE KREELS

Existing within huge robotic combat suits, Ki-Tar and Tri-Ang are small octopoids from Famera, a desolate wasteland after the inhabitants destroyed its ecosystem, in a series of nuclear wars. Despite their diminutive natural appearance, the Kreels are a highly aggressive species who have little time or patience for the niceties of fair competition.



THE ARQUONS

After millions of years of being submersed, the humanoid inhabitants of Aquarell have evolved into amphibians, existing for the main part in huge sea-bed cities. Shrapnel and Krush are, however, equally powerful either submerged or on land. They also have the ability to use their natural watery habitat as a force against their enemies.



THE TCHARIDS

A hive-based society, dominated by the powerful Queen, who decides how each Tcharid will serve the community. Shanilla and Kareen's prowess at athletics has been instilled in them since their youngest days on Lazilla. Especially adept in hot and dry conditions, the Tcharids prefer fighting in an environment similar to their natural, desert, plains.



THE LYKIRI

The occupiers of the planet Rigel are currently the lupine Lykiri. However, five miles beneath the frozen wastes and tundras of the surface, evidence of a far older civilisation has been uncovered. Ripsaw and Savij may not possess much skill when it comes to accurately using a power glove, but they make up for this with relentless aggression and ferocity.

more strategic levels of team management and league division manipulation.

TIP-PLAY

There are three main modes of play in *Pitball*. The first, and easiest, is the training ground where you are pitted against just one opponent, while you get used to the rules of Pitball, and how to enable your player to make the most of the moves, power-ups, pick-ups and practise the special moves. After a couple of bouts here, you may feel that you're ready to move on up to the real thing.

The second game is the arcade-style tournament, which is played against either the CPU, or up to three other players. This is the main game, where you have to score points by using your power glove to energise the sphere given to you and slam it into the waiting target near the top of the pit. You can use any of the four special

moves your player possess. The Turbo Attack, which, obviously, moves you around very fast, but your character's background and own natural abilities determine just how useful this is. Then there is the Special Attack (similar to, but not as complicated as, the unique character combos in *Street Fighter* or *Mortal Kombat*) and Jump Attack moves, which are useful when defending. Finally, there is the Super Special Attack move, but this is only usable when your team have collected three Crystal Orbs. The Orbs, like other pick-ups, can just materialise in the arena at odd times.

TOP TABLES

The third part of the game is the management level, where you piece together a perfect team of Pitballing duos and take them to the top of the Pitball League. Although you can't mix 'n' match different aliens to form a super team, you can use a variety from one planet. As each game progresses you can swap players, so that as they lose their performance peak, they



are relegated to an alternate team where, off-screen, they presumably practise until they're back in tip-top form. You can then buy specialist equipment to aid your players, trade players from other teams or even bribe players to throw matches. There is a bank which loans you enough to get your team started, but who require interest on their loans plus sponsors who will offer to float you cash. The equipment you buy includes variations on the power gloves and boots from the arcade game, but you can also buy power-ups to pro-

tect your players from physical harm, such as Head Power, Body Lower and Leg Power. All of this information can be saved on your memory card, enabling you to keep your league success (or failure) going over a long period of time.

Whether all this makes for an interesting game or not depends on your patience. It certainly seems to offer something for sports fans, beat 'em up fans and sim/management fans, but is this all-in-one combination going to appeal? Warner Interactive hope so.

EACH RACE WILL FIND SOME PLANETS THAT ENHANCE THEIR NATURAL ABILITIES AND OTHERS WHICH ARE DETRIMENTAL. HALF THE SKILL IN PITBALL IS TO MAKE THE BEST USE OF ANY LOCALE.



THE CYBORIANS

Astrocism 1 is a world based on the principle of a Dyson sphere, an inverted planet where people live on the inside of the surface. Blade and Saber are two robotic knights who wield high-tech weaponry under the guise of mystical energy. With a history of cybernetic holy wars behind them, the knights of Astrocism 1 are both fearless and unrelenting.



THE ANCIENTS

No one can pronounce the real name of the race who live on Activis IV, but partially due to their culture being so closely based upon Earth's ancient Roman empire, they've become known as the Ancients. The simian Gaius and Julius are the Emperor's chosen bodyguards who, because of their ape-like stature, make exceptionally good Pitball players.



THE TORONS

The Torons made their home on Toron Minor. As the rest of the galaxy used it as something of a waste dump, most of the natives took up a nomadic lifestyle among the stars. Some remained, eking an existence with the scrap materials other cultures left behind. Stampede and Rawhide are experts at creating new technology from all this junk.



THE KORPICANS

The avian race that dominate the planet Korpicus live in beautiful floating cities high in the atmosphere. Peaceful and aerobatic, Icarus and Thorax have been warned against using their excellent flying prowess in the game, but even so, being attuned to Korpicus' natural magics empowers them with strange forces that result in attacks both colourful and lethal.



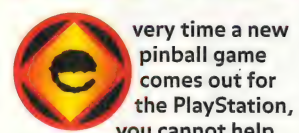
OXY AND OXYCUTE EM! ARE TRADE MARKS.

I USE **OXY DAILY CLEANSER** TWICE A DAY TO GIVE MY FACE A REALLY GOOD WASH. IT **CLEANS OUT THE DEEP-DOWN DIRT** FROM MY PORES AND HELPS TO PREVENT SPOTS BY **KILLING THE BACTERIA** THAT CAUSE THEM. **SPOTS? OXYCUTE EM!**





THE TOP-DOWN VIEWS GIVE YOU AN EXCELLENT OVERVIEW OF THE TABLE ITSELF BUT THE MORE TRADITIONAL 3D ANGLE IS FAR EASIER TO PLAY WITH.



very time a new pinball game comes out for the PlayStation, you cannot help but wonder what on Earth it can offer that makes it different from the others. Ocean's *True Pinball* was a straightforward basic pinball game with rather garish tables, but efficient and playable nevertheless. EA's *Extreme Pinball* was, however, the total opposite – being ugly, unplayable and tedious. Empire's *Pro Pinball – The Web* was as different again, with just one table but a quality of play and graphical supremacy completely unmatched by the others.

And this brings us to the contender for *Pro Pinball – The Web*'s crown, Virgin's *Tilt*. Ported from the recent PC game, perhaps *Tilt* is thus named because it was about the only game name they could think of that didn't actually feature the word pinball in it. And *Flipper* would sound like a game about dolphins (but then again, a pinball game based around a watery table with dolphins saving the balls has a certain appeal. Any licensors out there interested?). One of *Tilt*'s claims to fame appears to be that the tables are actually based on real pinball tables of the sort snuck away

in the corners of grimy amusement arcades and dodgy south London pubs. These have been painstakingly recreated by Virgin (who presumably spent many happy hours in Ye Olde Boozer doing research), although some of the names have subsequently been changed, and appear here in both 2D and 3D glory.

But, does *Tilt* offer the PlayStation player anything that they haven't seen at least three times before?

WHAT'S NEW, PUSSYCAT?

Well, there are currently two views on offer – a 2D top down scrolling version and a 3D table view version. As with *Extreme Pinball* and *Total Pinball*, the PlayStation 2D view sees the ball move so quickly that it has often dropped past the flippers before you have time to react. The PC version of *Tilt* also offered a 3D scrolling



MULTIBALL GAMES OCCUR IN EACH OF THE DIFFERENT TABLES; THE MORE BALLS YOU SAVE IN THE RELEVANT SUB-GAME, THE MORE BALLS YOU CAN PLAY WITH.

version, but it remains to be seen whether this ends up on the PlayStation adaptation.

Each table has unique features and sub-games and all offer a sound effects and up to six music tracks suitable for each game. The sound effects can range from the appropriate and amusing (*Fun Fair*, *Gangsters*) to the annoy-

ing and intrusive (*Roadking USA*) but without them, the game loses a dimension, so just grit your teeth and try not to wince as your ball roars into a pitstop, screeches to a halt down the channels or revs up as you spring load it onto the table. One aspect of gameplay that *Tilt* has over either the Ocean

SIX TIMES TABLES

There are six different table tops in *Tilt*, each seen from a slightly different angle making some easier than others. Needless to say, the tables that are the easiest to view tend to be the ones that are both the most enjoyable but also the most complicated.

Monster

Clearly based around those old films about the Frankenstein monster, with Karloff as the square-headed, bolted-through-the-neck unfortunate. One of the less enjoyable tops, because of its lack of features. Not very easy to follow with the table view, it gurgles and screeches, but isn't worth much time.



Fun Fair

The sort of fun fair Krusty from *The Simpsons* would devise – everything is a bit of a trick and has a habit of closing when you least expect it. Nevertheless, it's busy, noisy, very silly and quite challenging especially as it is split into two levels, and you cannot access the top end of the table until you've successfully lit up a section of the lower end. A good one.



Release : JUNE '96
Company : ACCLAIM
Price : TBA
Players : 1-2
Genre : SPORT



THE SIX TABLE TOPS OFFER A GOOD VARIATION OF SOUND EFFECTS AND MUSIC. THERE APPEARS TO BE A SCENARIO TO SUIT THE TASTE OF EVERY KIND OF PINBALL PLAYER.

game and the EA one is the ball fluidity. Almost reaching the perfection of *Pro Pinball – The Web*, *Tilt*'s balls move very well indeed, and when the table fills up for a quick bout of hundreds-of-balls-versus-the-player-at-once (well, four actually), the game is at its best.

On top of this, there

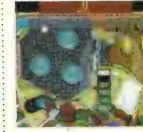
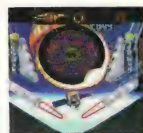
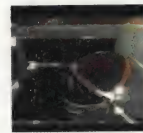
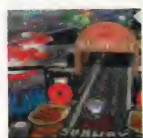
appear to be a variety of differing music tracks available, via the main select screen. So, if flipping your balls to some vaguely techno thumping isn't exactly your cup of infused herbs, then perhaps some rockin' heavy metal or thrash metal would be somewhat more appropriate.

CAN I HAVE MY BALL BACK?

The games themselves appear to be the usual pinball fare – a variety of ramps, dips, extra flippers and unusual entrances for the balls. Occasionally, it is difficult to see everything that is going on at one end of the table. The ball may be trapped in an enclosed area or around a corner blocked by other structural devices. This is often helped by the

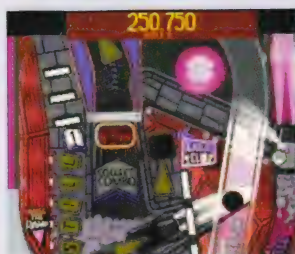
game dropping into an FMV sequence, showing you a quick guided tour of the area the ball is currently situated in, so that you can see from where all the bonus scores can be obtained, which lights are lit and which need better aiming at, etc. These FMVs can be a mite annoying at

times, as they occur when you least expect them to and it's not always clear to see what exact portion the table they are. You know your ball is somewhere in the top left, for instance, but sometimes you need a degree in cartography to work out which way you're now facing the table.



Gangstar

One of the most average of all the tables, it also ranks amongst the most enjoyable of them, being fast and cleverly designed. Looking like it was based on *The Untouchables*, you just light things up, score points and generally stay alive. With its accent on guns, bangs and shoot-ups, this is always good fun and has some nice jokes but rarely particularly taxing.



Star Quest

The best of the bunch. As with *Fun Fair*, there is a lot to do; the dot matrix screen offers some interesting options and it actually takes practise to get the high scores. With all the interest in *Independence Day* and recent discoveries on Mars and around Jupiter, the amount of sub-games ought to have people going for this over and over again.



Myst & Majik

Lots of potential here, but the clumsy table view makes it a bit awkward. There is little skill involved inside the fortress as the only way to see what is going on is via the top down view and switching between the two is a pain. Nevertheless, its colourful and has a marvellous 3D dragon's head that looks as if it should be part of a sub-game but isn't.

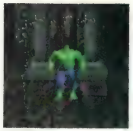
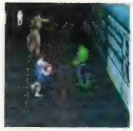
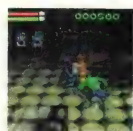


Roadking USA

The most aggravating game because of the noises. Every car sound you've ever heard sampled on a bad dance record is here. Distracting, these make the game uneventful, especially as the sub-games are all very similar and involve less skill than the other tables. Possibly the only table which looks better top down because of the detail in the design.



HAVING SURVIVED MORE THAN THIRTY YEARS AS A COMIC-BOOK ANTI-HERO AND A LONG-RUNNING TELEVISION SHOW, OL' GREEN-SKIN NOW FINDS HIMSELF ENTERING THE WORLD OF THE PLAYSTATION...



Incredible Hulk - The Pantheon Saga



everyone remembers the top *Incredible Hulk* television programme about the

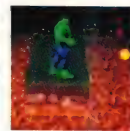
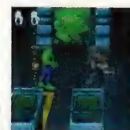
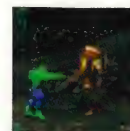
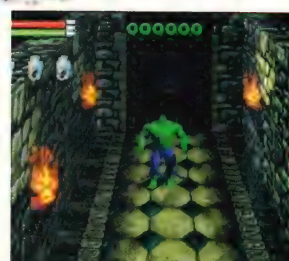
doctor who got caught in a heinous gamma bomb related accident and from then on turned into a giant green monster whenever he got angry, and probably most of you will have be aware of the long running Marvel comic based around the same character. Now from Eidos Interactive comes the latest video game tie-in. The previous licensed games featuring the Hulk were a bit ropey to say the least. Let's hope that Eidos have got it right this time with *Incredible Hulk - The Pantheon Saga*.

Judging by the screen shots, this particular take on greenie's antics is quite *Loadedesque* (top down 3D view, dark and spooky atmosphere), but examining it more closely reveals it to be a more beat 'em up influenced adventure, complete with finishing moves and a feature that is worryingly described as "sonic clap". Apparently influenced by 2D platform games, this should have more depth than its predecessors - due to what is referred to as its "impressive 3D platform environment".

However, we were not satisfied with merely being fed some fact tidbits. Instead we prefer a banquet of fact. So we decided to grill creators Attention to Detail. Would *Incredible Hulk - The Pantheon Saga* make other developers go green with envy, or will they blow milk out of their noses laughing at its wimp like inadequacy?

UNBELIEVABLE HULK

So Attention to Detail; what is it gonna be like, eh? Fat or thin, tall or short, statuesque or horribly deformed? Apparently, it's a bit "like



Doom" except rather than viewing from the traditional first person perspective, you look at the proceeding from an almost bird's-eye view. You wander around the world looking for things and bashing baddies very hard. Oddly enough though, Attention to Detail had a rather strange proviso from Marvel. "We weren't allowed to show the Hulk killing anyone". This means that most of the bad-dies are robots, unfortunately. Compensating for this is the fact that the Hulk can do loads of different moves including "punches, kicks, throws, floor smash, shoulder charge, spinning lariat and, of course, his sonic clap." However, the Hulk doesn't get to use any weapons (boo), but he *does* get to pick things up and throw them

around - including stunned enemies! (Hurrah hurrah, cheering and spontaneous street parties.)

This could all get a bit dull of course, if it weren't for some puzzle elements. Yup, it's not all thumping and fighting - the Hulk has to use his brain too. But will he need to turn back into Dr Bruce Banner to do these puzzles? Apparently not. Now the Hulk remains in his gigantic green superhuman form all the time, but fear not, he now has Bruce Banner's intellect too, rather than being a just a mindless pummelling machine. As well as puzzles, there is destructible scenery (hurrah!) and "secret traps".

UNFEASIBLE HULK

The plot is taken from the

CA BLACK. THE MORPHS ARE MORE DETAILED AND ARE MORE BRIGHTLY COLOURED TOO. THE MORPHS ARE MORE DETAILED AND ARE MORE BRIGHTLY TOO.

comic story *The Pantheon Saga*, and is all about the Hulk getting accepted into what looks rather like a superhero health club, but probably isn't. Anyway, first off, the Hulk has to defeat all the members of the Pantheon to prove himself worthy (no small task, as they all have hundreds of robotic minions to defend them). There are 17 characters, of which 13 are boss characters that you must whack into submission. After you have been accepted into the club you have proper enemies to defeat, and your missions take you all over the world, from

Release : NOVEMBER

Company : EIDOS INT.

Price : £44.95

Players : 1

Genre : ADVENTURE

WAVING A BANNER

Way back in the early Sixties, the Incredible Hulk was one of the new wave of Marvel heroes, riding the coat-tails of the Fantastic Four, Spider-Man and Iron Man. His origin typified the paranoia of the Sixties – scientist hit by blast from experimental weapon (a gamma bomb) while bravely rescuing hippy-like teenager from testing zone. Teenager (Rick Jones) saved, scientist (Bruce Banner) is mutated into huge grey behemoth with little intellect, called the Hulk. At night, the Hulk reverts to Banner who tries, vainly of course, to stop the transformations. He is in love with pretty young Betty Ross, whose father is General “Thunderbolt” Ross whose sworn mission is to destroy the Hulk. The mag lasted just one issue before vanishing for a few months, returning later in *Tales to*

Astonish, a two-hander which featured one Hulk short story and one Iron Man short story. On his return, ol’ Hulkie was inexplicably now green – which has, ever since, been the colour associated with every gamma-inspired Marvel character such as the Abomination (failed Russian spy), the Leader (nasty scientist) and Doc Samson (psychoanalyst – no, honestly).

As the years went by the Hulk has been variously shrunk, enlarged, intelligent, ultra-dim and, for a couple of years, grey again. By the time he ceased being grey and reverted to green, he retained Bruce Banner’s intellect, was married to Betty Ross and his transformations had been diagnosed as being as much to do with mental trauma as gamma radiation. It was in this era, written by one of comic-dom’s top authors, Peter David and illustrated variously by Todd

McFarlane, Dale Keown, Gary Frank, Liam Sharp and most recently Angel Medina. It was during the David/Keown/Frank era that the Pantheon were invented as a supporting cast. The Hulk went to work with the group while briefly separated from his wife. They composed of a core group of near eternal soldiers, based on Greek mythology, and led by the mysterious Agamemnon who would one day be seen as an old man and on another as a ten year-old boy, depending, frankly, on his moods. Each of the Pantheon had very diverse characters, but each was full of typically human failings, which were further compounded by the Pantheon’s natural immortality. Petty, jealous, greedy and selfish, they could also be charming, elegant, brave and tragic. After Agamemnon’s departure, the Hulk was left in charge of them and although in the current run of the comic, Banner has long since departed the

Pantheon (indeed, Banner and the Hulk have been separated into two beings), a majority of the characters still drop in and out of the storylines.



Scotland to Antarctica. As it’s such a big game, passwords after every level keep all the details of your progress and how well you are doing – no memory cards required.

There are a total of five missions based on five of the Hulk comic strip stories, and it culminates with a huge ruck between Hulk and the Maestro. No, not a small hatchback, but apparently Hulk’s alternate future self.

He also fights the Grecian mythological-based Pantheon – Hector, Ulysses, Atlanta as well as traditional Hulkian bad guys the U-Foes (Vector, X-ray and Iron Clad), and even Piece-meal and Lazarus, as well as all their little helpers. Apparently the game boasts “sophisticated enemy AI routines” as well as the “ability to pan camera thirty degrees left and right”.

UNIMAGINABLE HULK

As yet, we haven’t seen a playable code of *Incredible Hulk – The Pantheon Saga*, but it will be interesting to see if the brand-name can shrug off it’s 2D bad image for the 32bit format.



MAKING THE TRANSITION FROM 2D TO 3D, THE HULK FACES A VARIETY OF ENEMIES IN EIDOS’ NEW GAME.



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Black Dawn

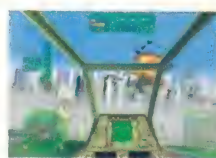


he PlayStation appears to be in danger of suffering from a glut of identical games at the moment. For every *Ridge Racer Revolution*, there is another five *Needs for Speeds*, *Impact Racing* etc. For every *Street Fighter Alpha*, there's a couple of *Toshindens* and *Tobal No. 1s*. For every *Olympic Soccer*, there are countless *Adidas Power Soccers* and *Onsides*. For every *Doom* there are a multitude of *POeds* and *Alien Trilogies*. Every genre the PlayStation can offer up is chock-a-block with games with highly similar, if not identical, engines. Novelty appears to be a dying art. That said, by no stretch of the imagination are any of the examples above necessarily poor relatives. Despite their status as Beat 'Em Ups, *Tekken 2*, *Toshinden*, the *Street Fighter* series and the *Rise of the Robots* bouts each have high levels of quality that make each better than others in some respects, worse in others.

Now, cast your minds back a few months and you may remember *Black Ops'* previous sim-come-blast-everything-out-of-the-skies game, *Agile Warrior*. While not exactly spearheading the slurry of such games for the PlayStation, it did fly higher



Release : NOVEMBER
Company : VIRGIN
Price : £44.95
Players : 1-2
Genre : SIM



and faster than most into the pretty darn good stakes. Followed by the likes of *Firestorm: Thunderhawk 2*, *Top Gun: Fire at Will*, *Gunship 2000*, *Raging Skies* and *Warhawk*, *Agile Warrior* was pretty much the best mix of aircraft simulator with exciting blow everything to bits action. Seizing upon this popularity, Virgin now draw your attention to the latest entrant into the arena – *Black Dawn*. Again, each of these shoot 'em up simulations have something to offer, but the question is beginning to be asked – where will it end. Will it take a really dreadful game to finish off any given genre explosion? Well, *Rayman* doesn't appear to have put the brakes on companies striving to make quality platformers – as early previews of *Crash Bandicoot* and *Pandemonium* have shown.

PARALLEL LINES

It would probably be a tad unfair to suggest *Black Dawn* is a straight sequel to *Agile Warrior*, but the parallels are hard to resist. You have missions around the globe, you take off, you shoot things, they blow up leaving power-ups floating in the air, you fly through 'em to collect 'em. Of course, it's never that sim-

MISSION CONTROL

Your missions take you and your 'copter all over the globe, but essentially, there are just four basic areas, of which each mission is a variant on.

URBAN

Seen here as part of Urban Shield, cityscapes, park lands and large lakes seem to be the order of the day, where the friendly forces have an annoying habit of getting in the way of your strafing.



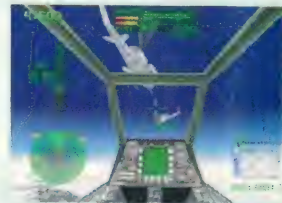
DESERT

Seen here as part of Desert Storm, the dunes contain many dips inside which lurk ground-forces, providing the enemy with methods of blowing you to pieces without you even seeing them.



ICE

Seen here as part of the Ice Storm, ice flows make seeing the enemy very clear but as a result they are usually swarming with bad guys. Planes, huts and helicopters dominate the horizon.



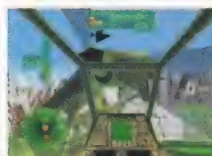
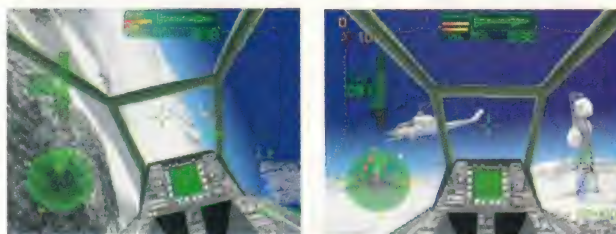
JUNGLE

Seen here as part of Tiger Trap. All that lush, dense greenery hides a multitude of anti-aircraft batteries and hidden bases from where the helicopters swarm up and mercilessly attack.



ple, because every time you believe you've wiped out the latest wave and dash around trying to catch up with those floating pick-ups you missed last time, up comes another onslaught of bad guys.

You do have some support though. Around the beginning of the mission are various tanks and a couple of helicopters labelled as "friendly" if you try to lock onto them. They'll help take a couple of potshots at the forces attacking you or act as decoy to draw their fire when you're swooping down trying to rescue hostages. However, don't rely on them to cover your back all the time, they have a tendency to get wiped out rather rapidly or pull away at inopportune moments. As with *Agile Warrior*, there are also handfuls of ground troops to take out with your ever-lasting machine gun, which while not



adding much to your score, can be immensely satisfying.

There are twenty-eight missions to play through, spread over the seven locations. Each of these is given to you as you embark, dotted across your screen for a few seconds. It may be taking out a particular base, collecting certain objects or rescuing people trapped on top of buildings. The handy map shows you exactly where you are in relation to your target (usually, a long way away) and direction indicators point out where the nearest attack is likely to come from. Annoyingly, you can be blasting away with your rockets, sidewinders or some such but when you fly into a handy napalm, your weapon select automatically defaults to it. Just as your about to deliver the final coup de grace, your sidewinder turns into the Billy Bunter-esque napalm which makes a pretty mess of the slopes below, but does not actually take out the

enemy 'copter. Unless you're at the right angle, in which case a napalm exploding in mid-air has an interesting, and immediately devastating effect on everything nearby. One to practise with.

PARTNERS IN CRIME

Unlike many flight sims, *Black Dawn* offers a two player game, which gives you the opportunity to cooperate with a chum in the missions. Both of you can blow the bad guys away, and then as the mission progresses, one of you can opt to save the guys on the ground, steal the radar dish or take out the fuel dump while the other covers your tail, keeping the enemy at bay. This is quite a novel twist on two-player sims and makes a welcome change from two-player carnage or competitiveness.

As mentioned above, there are seven basic mission locations, each with four random sub-missions. The locations

spread from South America (Operation: Black Out) through to the Gulf (Operation: Hurricane). Others include the Antarctic (Operation: Ice Storm), the Middle East (Operation: Desert Storm), the jungles of the Far East (Operation: Tiger Trap), California (Operation: Crack Down) and finally New York (Operation: Urban Shield).

On successful completion of a mission, you can also select the eighth level, Operation: Power Up, based in the Pacific Ocean. Here you have thirty seconds to fly around, blow up as many planes, airships and other assorted hardware and get loads of missiles, shields and fuel for your next encounter.

Black Dawn clearly is something of a sequel to *Agile Warrior* but not in any cheesy, *Jaws 2* way. This promises to be an interesting extension of an already good idea, rather than a tired rehash.



Go ahead, Dunk!



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UNLIKE DOOM, THE LEVELS IN DISRUPTOR ARE TRUE 3D. LOCATIONS ARE MORE INTRICATE, WITH WALKWAYS CROSSING OVER HALLS AND NASTIES LURKING IN CUBBY HOLES BENEATH THE STAIRS.

Disruptor



just as it looked as if it could not getting any worse, they all quit, leaving one bloke to face the alien horde – you. Yeah, it's cliched story it's a classic tale of good verses evil, of cowboys and indians, cops and robbers... well, you get the idea.

Anyway, the lone soldier must eliminate any alien threat by progressing through the each area of the infested planet in turn, torching everything that moves before leaving via the exit teleporter. Simple. Or it would be, if it wasn't for damn xenomorphs who just won't die. There are loads of the little buggers, from drone robot guards, to giant-sized insects, to Boba Fett-style mercenaries brandishing triple-barrelled lasers. Erk! Some are intelligent and attempt to avoid laser fire while others are just plain dumb, homing in on the nearest target even if it means running through a stream of plasma blasts fired by another enemy!

BE PREPARED

Who cares about those alien ponces though, we LightStormers are prepared for anything. So, as well as the standard-issue Swiss army knife and space boots, with the small compass in the heel, there are stacks of weapons to be had. Things start off small, with just the obligatory hand-axe and a pathetic pistol to hand. Within seconds the death count looks considerably more impressive as the automatic machine gun is introduced – firing the same ammunition as the hand gun, it's not that powerful but it'll tear through most enemies in a matter of seconds. Much more is exciting is the Phase Rifle, a laser-type thing that spits green or red balls of plasma, depending on the power cells which have been loaded up.

Initially each gun is found discarded on the floor, although later in the game chunkier blasters are grabbed from the charred



Just when you thought it was safe to switch on the PlayStation, up pops another *Doom* clone. Groan. Don't get me wrong, I love *Doom* in all of its guises. I also think some of the 'tributes' are pretty cool, like *Alien Trilogy* for example. However, there's only so much one can take and the pool of first-person blasters is rapidly over-flowing. *Disruptor* promises to be different though. True, from first impressions there seems very little between the two but underneath that all-too-familiar shell lies a game that

seems to be far more complex than id software's hallowed classic.

The first product to emerge from the newly-formed Universal Studios Interactive stable, *Disruptor* is similar in more ways to LucasArts' forthcoming *Dark Forces* than *Doom* itself. It's more mission based, with more emphasis on solving simple puzzles rather than mindlessly charging into a room full of blood thirsty imps, guns blazing. Nevertheless, *Disruptor* is still packed with meaty weapons and loads of cannon fodder for target practice, but wading knee-deep through blood, guts and gore is purely par for the course in this style of game – excellent!

FUTURE SHOCK

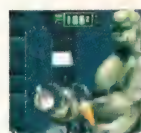
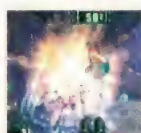
The game is set in a bleak vision of the future, a time when mankind has spread throughout the galaxy and is slowly building settlements in the farthest depths of space. Naturally the indigenous life from each of the planets isn't particularly happy with the arrival of some loud-mouth trash who proceed to litter the natural landscape with architectural monstrosities and, even worse, Asda superstores. So



CAPTION TEXT TO GO IN HERE. IN THE BRILIANT PLATHE BRILIANT PLAYSTATIYSTATI CAPTION TEXT TO GO IN HERE CAPTION TEXT TO GO IN HERE



they fight back, and we humans are left to protect what's ours with just a handful of elite soldiers – the LightStormer troops. And,



Release : OCTOBER
Company : INTERPLAY
Price : TBA
Players : 1
Genre : ARCADE ADV.

ALIEN INFESTATION

It's just too much, I can't take any more. *Doom* I could handle. Even *Alien Trilogy* came and went without too much trouble. But *Disruptor* has too many levels to explore, too many aliens to fight. I'm tired, I don't think I can last much longer...



JUPITER STATION

Another level which takes place inside one of the alien installations. Expect to find armed guards who prefer to fire first and ask questions later. Grab the AM cannons from the smoking corpses!



CHEMICAL FACTORY

Clamping down a respirator to shut out the toxic atmosphere of this decaying planet, the lone soldier must leap avoid the bubbling acid pools and head for the control tower in the hazy distance.



ROOFTOPS

Infested with heavily armored guard droids, the rooftops are no place for the faint-hearted. With sheer drops on every side, use the elevators to access the inner depths of the alien HQ.



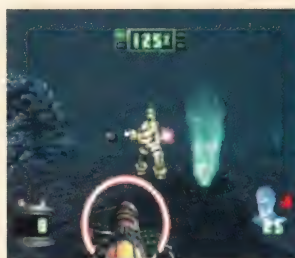
OBSTACLE COURSE

A simple training mission, so enemies rarely come any larger than the sanitary droid. Psychic powers have yet to form so the Light Stormers must rely on their trusty blaster pistol.



MUTANT LAB

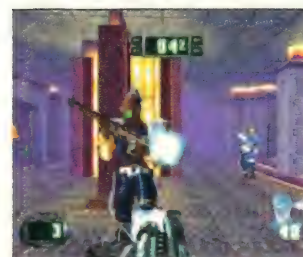
Head through claustrophobic corridors before venturing into the wasteland of the planet surface. Mutants stagger around, ravenous insects swarm and mercenaries wield heat-seeking cannons.



corpse of a recently fragged alien. The AM cannon is carried by most alien guards and fires of a spray of dazzling light. Although visually spectacular it's effectively identical to the shotgun in *Doom*, and is therefore perfect for bagging multiple enemies. Then there's the Lockon Canon, a nifty piece of kit if a little bulky. Sitting over the shoulder, simply acquire a target in the cross-hair and fire. A small ball then zips off and promptly kills the hapless target. Neat.

OPEN YOUR MIND

Disruptor is more than just a glorified shoot 'em up, though. Yeah, there are loads of weapons to wave around frantically but gamer's must also rely on their brains – literally. Psychic powers fea-



ture heavily, acting, if you will, as a sort of secondary weapon. Increasing in power through experience rather than power-ups, mind-blasts can be used to shock an enemies, frying their brain in an instant. Alternatively energy orbs can be summoned and then directed at a target which they automatically attack, draining it's life-force. Psychic abilities can also be used for less aggressive purposes, for replenishing health for example, although there is a wide variety of bonuses with pretty much the same effect.

Still, you'll need a hell of a

lot of Band Aids before the LightStormers eventually exterminate the alien threat. With over a dozen uniquely-styled levels crawling with bizarre monsters and booby-traps, *Disruptor* really is a battle against the odds. But, isn't that always the way?



I love my pound of flesh...



The Consumer

You got even. Now get

RE LOADED

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Grid Run



ack in the olden days, prior to the domination of radio, television, videos or even consoles on our leisure hours, young boys in short trousers would healthily race around school playgrounds. They would be chasing each other and, if any contact was made, bellowing "You're It!". Or "Tag!". Or "You're Billy Postlethwaite, the fat, smelly, spotty twerp from Class 4B who no-one wants to be friends with!".

As time went on, the latter category rapidly became "You're the one from the Monkees who isn't talented," in the Sixties through to "You're the one no one fancies from the Bay City Rollers" in the Seventies. The Eighties gave us two alternatives – either "You're the one from Bros who isn't a clone" or, thanks to some enterprising American, "You're lasered." The latter was the result of the invention, around 1983, of a game known as laser tag. No longer could our now jeans-and-trainers-wearing youths dash around their playground – they were too heavily laden down with a breastplate and gun, just about able to blast



each other from, oh, at least five inches away. Then your opponent's breastplate would flash red and he'd be "tagged." Or that, at least, was the principle. In practise, the guns never worked properly, the breastplates broke easily and the whole game, which your dad had taken out a second mortgage to pay for, was something of a flop.

So as the idea of home laser tag faded (and went



into bigger Quasar-style arenas – where you relied on other people's honesty when they told you who'd been shot and who hadn't), now we come to the Nineties version, *Grid Run*.

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE.

For all its fancy trappings and background story, *Grid Run* is simply an electronic version of tag. The screen even tells you when you've been touched and become "it" – aided by a rather large red cross floating above your head. Your character races around various different raised areas, leaping across bridges, building energy platforms and trying not to run into deflector arrows that fling you back, in an effort to reach a series of randomly

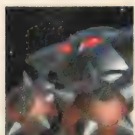
positioned flags. Provided you are not "it" (or the marginally uglier one from Bros), you must race around, turning the flags into your particular colour (easily identifiable because of the colour of your suit). Should you be touched by "it", you become "it" and must retouch the other player before you may resume your flag grabbing. Needless to say, by the time you've located the other player (a handy arrow gives you a very loose hint), he's swapped all your coloured flags into his coloured flags.

Of course, you do have a certain amount of help. Firstly, all four buttons on the joypad have uses. The X lets you place an energy block onto the air between pathways so you can short cut to other paths of flags.

The ▲ allows faster running, while the ■ fires tiny laser blasts. Finally the ● enables you to place mines along the path, although if you double back, these are just as likely to floor you as they are the enemy. Frankly neither the laser or the mines do a great deal of damage to your foe but they do momentarily slow them down.

Other helpful artifacts include the four pick-ups you find dotted around. Three of these are coloured globules that just hover around and you simply run into them to collect them. They come in three colours. Red for added magical powers, green for extra speed and blue for extra agility. As well as these, you will also encounter a number of hour-glasses dotted around the

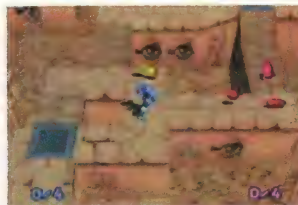
MINOX,
KROSH AND
LEHOTEP
ARE JUST
THREE OF THE
CHARMING
INHABITANTS
FIGHTING TO
SURVIVE ON
THE GRIDS.



Release : OCT
Company : VIRGIN
Price : £44.95
Players : 1-4
Genre : ADVENTURE



1: A VAST ALIEN STARSHIP DRAWS YOU INSIDE IT.



2: WITH YOUR CHARMING CO-PILOT, YOU SET OUT TO EXPLORE.



3: A BIZARRE, STAR-SHAPED ENERGISED OBJECT FLOATS AHEAD OF YOU.



4: BRAVELY, YOU DON YOUR SUIT...

5: ...AND BEGIN TO EXPLORE.

6: THEN THE DOOR SLAMS SHUT BEHIND YOU, THERE'S NO WAY OUT...

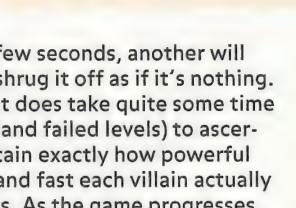
7: THEN 'SHE' ARRIVES...

8: ...CHUCKING ENERGY ABOUT WITH GAY ABANDON.

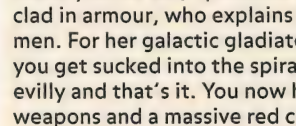
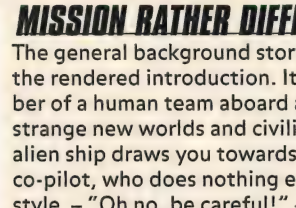
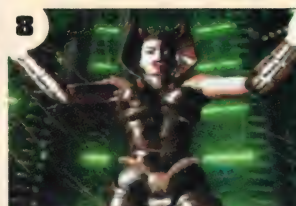
9: AS SHE SCREECHES HER LAUGHTER, SOME OF THE ENERGY STRIKES YOU, SPIRALLING YOU UPWARDS AND INTO HER GRIDS...

place. You need to get as many of these as possible. When the level is over and you've won, you get a bonus level. This is a straightforward chase all over the place against the clock to pick up as many pick-ups as you can. The number of hourglasses you collected in the last round, indicates how long you have, with each hourglass representing a mere five seconds.

Each level, which contains three games, featuring a different alien from a different planet. Whether it's the super slow android Krosh of Solaria, the cumbersome but relentless Minox from Nimbus or the hyperfast reptilian Lethotep from Circe, each opponent has something different about them, ensuring that no two competitors are exactly identical. Krosh, for instance, is really very slow and easy to get away from, whereas although Lethotep may not be as accurate a shooter as Krosh, he can nip across platforms far more nimbly and tag you before you realise what is going on. Your weaponry will affect them in different ways as well. While your laser guns may stun one foe for a



few seconds, another will shrug it off as if it's nothing. It does take quite some time (and failed levels) to ascertain exactly how powerful and fast each villain actually is. As the game progresses, so the enemies become more and more adept at outwitting you, and each appears to be far more at home in whichever level your battling than you can hope it be.



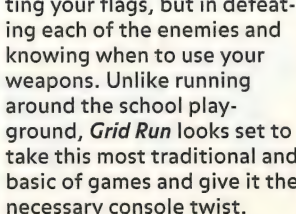
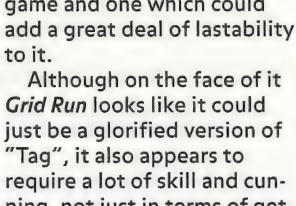
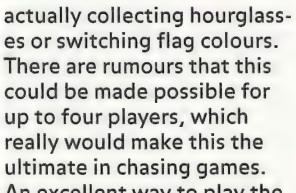
MISSION RATHER DIFFICULT

The general background story to the game is explained in the rendered introduction. It appears that you are a member of a human team aboard a space shuttle, exploring strange new worlds and civilisations in deep space. A large alien ship draws you towards it and, along with an attractive co-pilot, who does nothing except act in a Fifties B-movie style – "Oh no, be careful!" – you investigate. Wham bam, thank you ma'am, up stands some kind of sci-fi supabitch, clad in armour, who explains that you are the perfect specimen. For her galactic gladiatorial arena, naturally. And so you get sucked into the spiralling vortex and she laughs evilly and that's it. You now have your powers, your weapons and a massive red cross hovering above your head!



THE MORE THEY STAY THE SAME

There is a two-player version of the game (either through a split-screen or link-up cable), where both players appear as humans – one in traditional blue, the other in pink. Hmm. This is the closest that you ever get to real tag, as you both spend far more time chasing each other than



actually collecting hourglasses or switching flag colours. There are rumours that this could be made possible for up to four players, which really would make this the ultimate in chasing games. An excellent way to play the game and one which could add a great deal of lastability to it.

Although on the face of it *Grid Run* looks like it could just be a glorified version of "Tag", it also appears to require a lot of skill and cunning, not just in terms of getting your flags, but in defeating each of the enemies and knowing when to use your weapons. Unlike running around the school playground, *Grid Run* looks set to take this most traditional and basic of games and give it the necessary console twist.





Solved



Formula 1

FORMULA 1



Of all the racing sims that are available, there seems to be little doubt that Psygnosis' Formula 1 is the most popular, with its adherence to accuracy, its effective gameplay and well animated tracks and vehicles. Over the next two issues, PlayStation Plus is presenting an exclusive examination of the tracks and providing a few hints about how best to make your way around each stretch and curve.

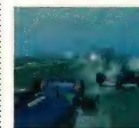


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ALTHOUGH RACING AROUND EACH OF THE TRACKS IN FORMULA 1 CAN BE STRAIGHTFORWARD FUN, THESE FEW HANDY HINTS WILL PROVIDE A BETTER CHANCE OF VICTORY.



GENERAL HELPFUL HINTS

CONTROLLING YOUR CAR

Formula 1 features 35 drivers spread over 13 teams, ranging from Benetton to Ferrari. Within the teams none of the drivers are the same – like their real-life counterparts, they have their own handling characteristics and drive at different speeds on different parts of the tracks.

The top all-round team is Benetton, with Michael Schumacher and Johnny Herbert being the fastest at

long straights, but their vehicles are much harder to keep control over on tight bends, lacking the turning circle of either the Benetton or McLaren cars. Put a Williams on, say, Aida or Monaco and their handling won't be as good as the others. The Ferrari is very good along the straights and despite not having great handling on corners, comes out of them faster than the others. With a bit of work, the Ferrari has potential for helping you win the championship.

CORNERING

The best way to take a corner



cornering and along the straights. Their cars are Equally good at maintaining speed coming out of the corners, and rarely spin or drop speed as the corner is taken.

Another good team for speed at cornering is the McLaren group, but unlike the Benetton or Williams teams, they aren't so good on straights. Williams on the other hand are fastest on

in *Formula 1* is to brake on taking the corner and then hitting the gas for maximum speed as you come out of it. But beware of tracks with very tight corners or severe twists (Monaco, or Argentina for instance) as these need to be taken at the right speed, which means that a quick jab at the brake would be better than a full on to-the-floor braking manoeuvre.

with the rear-view mirror, the in-car views are deceptive as to where exactly your opponents are. As you get to grips with the game and feel confident about the individual tracks, move into the cockpit view (great for fans of the vehicles themselves) and then later into the main in-car views but beware the above warnings, you may feel a bit isolated and lost.



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DOWNFORCE SETTING

To get the best results out of *Formula 1* racing cars, you need to adjust the downforce setting of your vehicle before racing on individual tracks. The higher the downforce setting, the better grip you'll have on the road. And this therefore increas-

es speed on cornering, although can lose you speed on a straight. But you can regain time by the tight cornering, so it's a bit of swings and roundabouts.

Conversely, the lower the downforce setting, the faster the car goes down the straights but slower round the bends. You

These track runarounds are intended to focus on three of the harder corners on each circuit. A suggestion has been made on speeds needed for best acceleration out of them and what downforce you need on the track.

Wakefield Corner

SPEED: 90 MPH

NOTES

One of the Aussie's hardest twists, this right-hander needs to be taken in third gear and make use of the run-offs to pick up speed when exiting.

Flinders Street

SPEED: 90 MPH

NOTES:

Another one in which the run-offs will be of great help when leaving, you want to be in third gear on this right-hander.

Roundabout

SPEED: 60 MPH

NOTES

Dangerous, having just bombed along the Brabham Straight at 200mph, you need to hit this hairpin in first to be safe. A very tricky gear change-down.

ADELAIDE

DOWNFORCE:
Medium low



Hair Pin Corner

SPEED: 60 MPH

NOTES

Coming off the long straight, you need to go into this in first gear.

Piper Corner

SPEED: 90 MPH

NOTES

A tight left-hander, go into this in second gear.

Redman Corner

SPEED: 70 MPH

NOTES

You need to be in second gear as you hit this left-hander.

AIDA

DOWNFORCE
Medium



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also take longer to exit the corners because your braking will slow you down further.

There are actually only three courses where you need maximum downforce. Firstly, Monaco, with its famous twisting corners, which require the high downforce to get a good lap

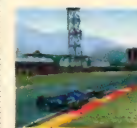
time. Argentina and Aida also require maximum downforce, again because of their severe cornering.

OTHER HINTS AND TIPS

If you're using the in-car view, to keep the CPU car trapped

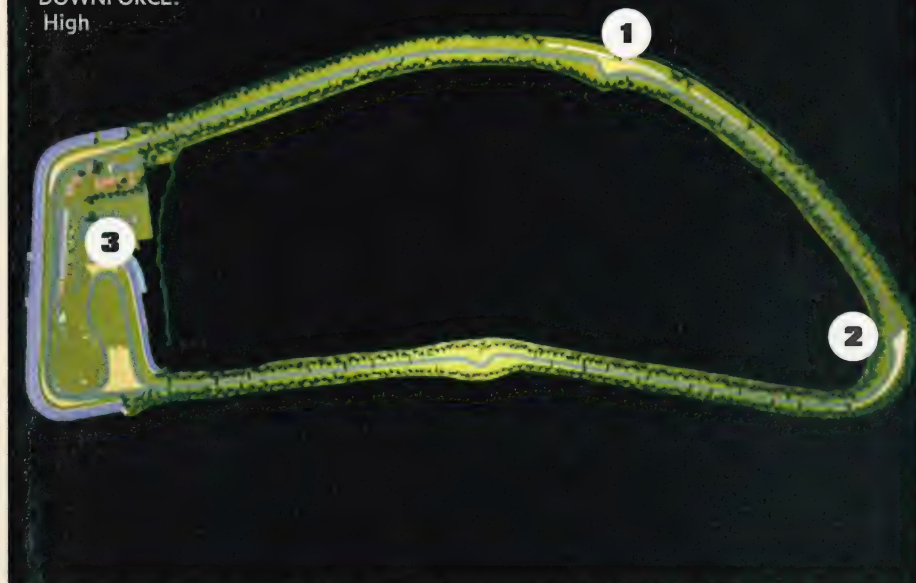


ALWAYS MAKE USE OF BOTH BRAKES AND GEAR CHANGES WHEN HITTING CORNERS.



HOCKENHEIM

DOWNFORCE:
High



Clarke Curve

SPEED: 135 mph

NOTES

Named after Jim Clarke, who died on this track. A dangerous right then left, it needs to be taken in fourth, but up to fifth as you come out of it.

Bremskurve

SPEED: 85 mph

NOTES

Take this in second gear because this one creeps up on you unexpectedly.

Sachs Curve

SPEED: 85 mph

NOTES

Again, take this in second because it's a tight hairpin, and needs to be approached along the racing line.

MAGNY-COURS

DOWNFORCE:
Medium



Adelaide

SPEED: 65 mph

NOTES

Best taken in first gear, make sure you take this by approaching from the left-hand side of the track.

Imola

SPEED: 85 mph

NOTES

Second gear is the best bet for this tricky right-hander.

Lycee

SPEED: 75 mph

NOTES

Another right-hander, use the racing line to go into this, in second gear.

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behind you, and rely extensively on your rear-view mirror and use the highest viewpoint to block them just as they attempt to overtake.

To move places up, use the inside of corners for speed and just brush against the CPU cars, which should slow them

down sufficiently for you to move on up easily. This is especially sneaky on tight corners.

The grass and run-off strips make for useful friends, unless it's raining. Grass especially is a no-no in the wet as skidding becomes remarkably simple and you lose a number of places

Virage de Saint Devote

SPEED: 70 mph

NOTES

A helpful tip here is to pull away at the start of the race and stay at the right-hand side of the circuit and as you hit this corner, you ought to be able to move a large number of places up by passing the cars as they head into the curve.

Virage du Portier

SPEED: 105 mph

NOTES

Take this in third gear but change straight to fourth as you come out of the turn.

Virage de la Rascasse

SPEED: 50 mph

NOTES

Take this one in first gear.

MONACO

DOWNFORCE:
Maximum



Castrol Bend

SPEED: 85 MPH

NOTES

A relaxed right-hander, taken in second gear.

Dunlop Kehre

SPEED: 75 MPH

NOTES

Yet another right-hander, this one also requires second gear.

Veudol Schikane

SPEED: 95 MPH

NOTES

A short but difficult left-then right-hander, enter it from the right and brake, dropping into third gear to take it successfully.

NURBURGRING

DOWNFORCE
Medium low



Try it before

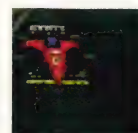
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as you attempt to right yourself. Don't try and accelerate on grass because the same sort of spinning will occur, you'll lose your position and end up arse over tit somewhere, looking daft. Similarly, revving up on the run-off strips will cause position-losing skids. Oh, and stay well away from sand traps as

these slow you right down and lose you bags of time.

Finally, when in the practise runs, gain time by cutting corners and looking for quick run-offs as you will make up useful moments by going across them.

Next Issue: The Final Tracks



SILVERSTONE

DOWNFORCE:
Low



Copse Corner

SPEED: 115 mph

NOTES

Damon Hill's least favourite corner should be taken by following the racing line and in third gear.

Stowe

SPEED: 95 mph

NOTES

This looks like it ought to be a fast corner, but be careful, you need to be in second gear, changing up as you take the actual turn.

Abbey Curve

SPEED: 105 mph

NOTES

This is a really awkward corner because it just appears when you least expect a curve to do so. Take it in third gear and stay on the right.

SPA

DOWNFORCE:
Low



La Source

SPEED: 85 mph

NOTES

A very tricky tight right hander, best approached from the straight and then taken on the right, narrowly missing the corner, in second gear.

Les Combes

SPEED: 120 mph

NOTES

Another unexpected twist, and needs to be taken in fourth.

Bus Stop

SPEED: 65 mph

NOTES

Stay close to the wall in second, but as you clear it, change up to third and pull away at 120 mph.

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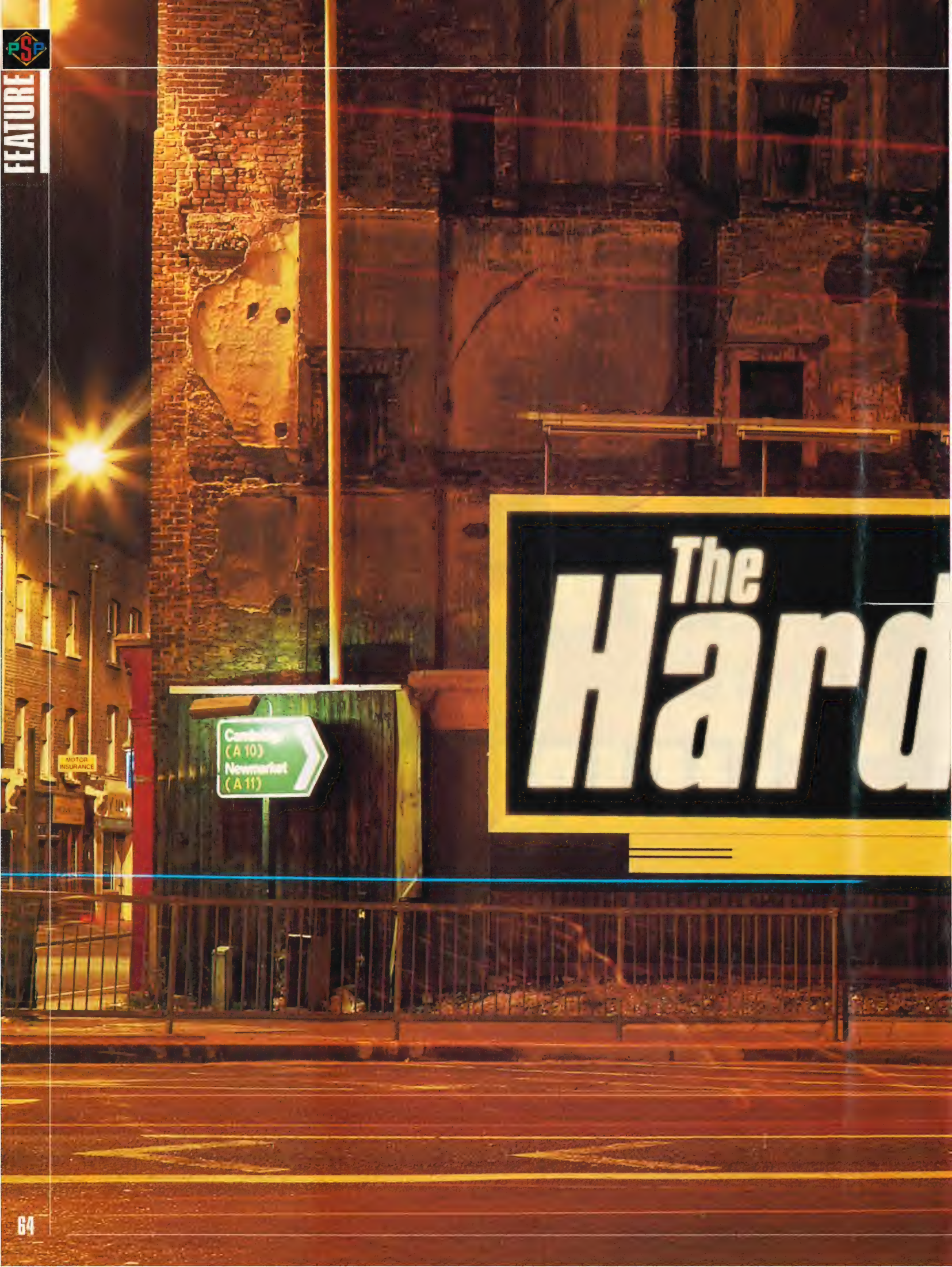
SPEED KILLS

BUT IT'S YOUR ONLY HOPE OF ESCAPING

TUNNEL B1

YOUR THROAT'S ON FIRE. **THIS TIME.** EYES BLEED. HEAD POUNDS. **THIS TIME.** NEITHER ROCK NOR STEEL WILL STAND IN YOUR WAY. NEITHER CHOICE NOR CHANCE WILL OPPOSE YOU. THE CITY ABOVE IS THREATENED WITH EXTINCTION. **MAKE NO MISTAKE,** THE PRESSURE IS ON. **TUNNEL B1** IS THE ONLY WAY IN. **THIS ISN'T GOING TO BE EASY.**





The Hard

Video game companies are using increasingly controversial advertising to **promote their games**. What happens when they cross the line of what's acceptable? Adam Peters takes tea with the **Advertising Standards Authority...**



Kn
Give



So, Who Watches the Watchmen?

Shit. Crap. Bollocks. *PlayStation Plus* prints these words. *Radio Times* probably wouldn't, though they have been known to have the occasional 'crap'. Music magazine *Select*, on the other hand, goes all the way, printing the F-word in all its glory. While there are certain guidelines – WH Smith, for instance, print a list of words they think are acceptable for the age range of a magazine's readership – it's down to the individual magazine to decide what is acceptable in its editorial content. If someone has a complaint about the language or imagery within the editorial pages of a magazine, they take it up with the publishers.

When it comes to advertising, though, there is an external body – the Advertising Standards Authority. The ASA regulates the world of print advertising, investigating adverts based on complaints from the public. If they uphold the complaint, they expect the advert to be withdrawn. It's something that's been happening an awful lot in the world of video games recently.

Some of the highest profile games of the last couple of years have been the subject of 'banned' advertisements; *Doom 2*, *Virtua Racing*, *Wipe-out*, possibly soon to be joined by *Resident Evil*. So what's happening? Are the ASA being a bunch or killjoys, or are the games companies taking the piss? And what do the ASA actually do anyway? We took a trip to the Association's offices in London's literary quarter to find out...



Standards Bearer

Bill Lennon is a spokesman for the Advertising Standards Authority. So where does the ASA draw the line between controversial and unacceptable? And do the video games companies really gain more by playing it safe than they would by getting all their ads banned? Take it away, Mr Lennon...

So exactly how did the ASA come into existence?

"At the start of the Sixties the advertising industry decided it needed to get its house in order. There were regulations in place for telecern; recently we conducted a detailed study of slimming adverts. Our third function is offering pre-publication advice to advertisers and publishers. No advertiser is bound to seek our advice, it's not mandatory, but it's in their interest. If they go ahead with a controversial campaign without consulting us, there is a chance they might need to scrap the campaign halfway through because of complaints received. We can also advise them which media are best for a given style of advert."

How do you enforce your decisions? It's not the law, is it?

"It's self-regulation. The advertising industry has undertaken to regulate itself and in most cases the advertisers will comply with our judgments. If someone ignores our ruling we may call on the media not to run the ad. We do generate adverse publicity for those who break our code."

So do you get many complaints about video game adverts?

"There has been a slight increase recently. The complaints tend to be from people who consider some of the imagery to be gory and setting a bad example. These kind of complaints are difficult to deal with. It often depends on the medium being used. Posters have an unrestricted audience. Magazines like *PlayStation Plus*, even though they're aimed at people in their twenties, do still tend to be read by some younger people. We have to take that into account. As well as the target audience for the ad, we have to consider other people who might see it. There are some adverts which are obviously unacceptable. Drugs references are a big no-no, such as the recent advert with the line 'score some speed from your local dealer'. There was also an advert with a picture of a girl and boy with blood coming from their noses. This appeared in video game magazines and could very easily distress younger readers."

Aren't you worried about doing companies' PR for them? All those lovely stories in The Sun

about various adverts that are being banned.

"This is an issue that's come up recently, but it's very difficult to do anything about it. People do abuse the system, but they remain in a small minority. It's not just the ASA that is being used, but the journalists that run the stories. Luckily, most advertisers realise that a system of self-regulation is the most advantageous for everyone, and if that system is abused it could lead to tighter controls."

Following on from that, how many of the anonymous complaints you receive do you think actually come from the advertisers themselves?

"I'd be very surprised if that were the case. Such behaviour would show a very callous disregard for the system. It's extremely unlikely that anyone would do that. I hadn't even thought of it before you suggested it. One thing we do have to be aware of is the politics behind a complaint. If the complainant provides lots of background information, we have to assume they are a competitor of the advertiser. They should declare that."



Are Benetton to blame for shocking ads?

"Benetton decided they were going to adopt controversial tactics to gain publicity. In the short term it worked. The reason people found those advertisements distasteful is that what they were supposed to be advertising was colourful jumpers and clothes. Pictures of AIDS patients and babies weren't relevant to the product. Some of the Benetton franchises in Europe actually took the company to court because they blamed a loss in sales on those very advertising tactics. So, in the long term the campaign definitely seemed to backfire."

But violent images are relevant to video games...

"Yes, you can't say the use of

violent or gory images in a game advert are totally gratuitous, because it's part of the product being advertised. There are limits to how much violence and gore is acceptable, and that's the reason that advertisers should come to us for advice before running a campaign."

Isn't it the case that by the time you have investigated a complaint the campaign will already have finished?

"We operate in a flexible manner and we've brought in new procedures to counter that. If we feel it's appropriate we can push through at a fast rate and reach an adjudication quickly. There has to be a bit of restraint. We can't make knee-jerk reactions. It's better to reach a decision where the rationale can be understood, rather than reach a decision quickly and then realise it's wrong. If it's



appropriate, though, we can call on poster site owners to withdraw an advert overnight. The advertising industry as a whole is moving away from shock tactics. His-story has shown us that shocking adverts only work for a short time. People become desensitised to them."

How do you decide what's acceptable? Is it based on your guidelines or more upon personal feelings?

"We do have some guidelines. Images used in adverts

shouldn't be violent or distressing. They shouldn't provoke anti-social behaviour, and should demonstrate a sense of responsibility to the consumer and society. We do have to judge each advert in context, based on who is likely to see it and how relevant the approach is. Public morality changes. There is an increased sensitivity to images of guns at the moment, in the light of recent news events."

What kind of people are the sort who make complaints?

"In the past there tended to be more of a moral consensus within society. These days we've seen a tightening up in certain areas and a loosening in others. There are those people who find practically everything offensive and want the strongest form of censorship. On the other side you've got those who believe that anything goes. Neither of these groups reflects the middle-ground, which is where the ASA has to be."

Do a lot of complaints come from pressure groups?

"They come from people who have seen an advert and are genuinely concerned about it. We have received a number of complaints about games adverts that haven't been upheld. We didn't see the complaints as justified. Often

the complainant had seen an advert that wasn't really aimed at them, such as a parent flicking through their child's game magazine and not really understanding what the advert was about."

So what kind of advice would you give to advertisers planning a dicey campaign?

"Come and see us first. We can help you choose the right media to limit the potential for offending the audience and lessen the likelihood of complaints being received."

BILL LENNON SUGGESTS THAT ADVERTISERS WOULD BE BEST SERVED IF THEY WENT TO THE ASA BEFORE SPENDING MONEY ON THEIR CAMPAIGNS. WITH THIS IN MIND, WE INVENTED THREE POTENTIAL ADVERTS THAT MIGHT BE SEEN AS SHOCKING AND PRESENTED THEM TO BILL FOR HIS EXPERT OPINION. THE RESULTS CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 72.



WHAT THE WATCHERS WATCH FOR

All this talk of standards being observed or broken is all very well, but what exactly are the Advertising Standards Authority, and what gives them the right to pass judgments on those hard-working men and women whose jobs it is to sell someone else's product?

Well, the ASA was established in 1962 to provide an independent jurisdiction over the advertising industry. It is not part of the Government or any other oligarchy – nor the industry itself – probably to avoid possible governmental or industrial influence. It's a limited company and over fifty per cent of its ruling body (of twelve) are appointed by the Chairman from walks of life completely unrelated to advertising. The Council members are selected, rather like a jury, from as wide a social diversity group as possible, to enable the ASA to work best at maintaining the highest standards appropriate to everyone.

Its chief tasks are to enforce a high standard of advertising across all non-broadcasting media; to investigate any complaints levelled against the industry and to resolve these problems wholly independently. It is answerable to the general public and has the power to legally enforce an advertiser to change or cease an advertisement if a complaint is upheld. The ASA meet to discuss a case and in a similar way to the television and radio Broadcasting Complaints Commission, its findings are published monthly and freely available to all, most easily via libraries.

Through its experience, it also strives to prevent bad advertising methods by identifying current trends and hopefully therefore preventing future problematic areas.

WHAT MAY SEEM TO BE A WITTY, IF DARK, TAG LINE TO A WELL-PAID COPY-WRITER COULD HAVE QUITE THE REVERSE EFFECT ON ONE OF THE INDUSTRY'S WATCHDOGS AT THE ASA, AS VIRGIN HAVE DISCOVERED ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION.

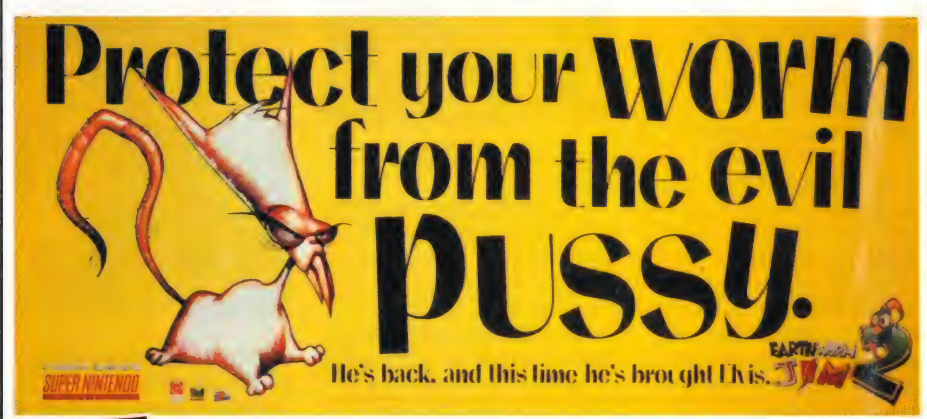


The games company with probably the biggest reputation for **controversial advertising** is **Virgin Interactive**. The boy racers of VIE have had several run-ins with the **ASA**. Here we focus on three recent campaigns. Bill Lennon of the **ASA** puts the case for the prosecution.

Virgin goes all the way EarthWorm Jim

The prosecution: "This shows that not every advert is the subject of a complaint. If these only appeared as magazine adverts, perhaps the nature of the magazine meant the readership wouldn't think twice about this approach. It's schoolboy humour, but it's not likely to offend on any major scale. It's the kind of advert that would appear in something like *Viz*. If anything, it's tame for *Viz*. You're not likely to get any *Viz* readers ringing up to complain about adverts like this."

The verdict: No complaints received. No action taken by the ASA.



Screamer

The prosecution: "We did receive complaints about this. We were concerned that the while the advert contained an anti-drink/drive message, at the same time it almost glamourised drinking and driving. We felt this was an ill-advised approach, particularly the image of an upturned car. We upheld the complaint. Because the problem here it is the overall approach – rather than an inaccuracy – we'd expect the advert to be withdrawn."

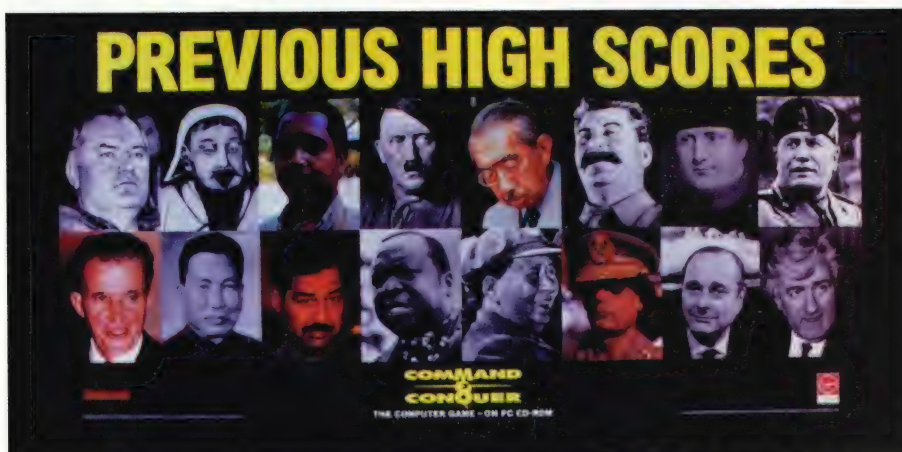
The verdict: Complaint upheld.

Command and Conquer

The prosecution: "This was felt by some people to be a rather distasteful approach. The ASA's main concern was the association of Jacques Chirac with the other people in the advert, who are all well known for being tyrants. Okay, so Chirac's the President of France, but that doesn't mean he should be associated with people like Saddam Hussein and Hitler. There are people who found the advert as a whole distasteful, but that doesn't necessarily mean the ASA would investigate and ask for the advert to be withdrawn. Something can be distasteful without being offensive."

The verdict: The ASA asked for the photo of Jacques Chirac to be covered up. The censored ads were allowed to remain on display.

The defence: Virgin's Sean Brennan puts the case for the defence. "Our campaigns are not just gratuitous or trying to be controversial, they're merely reflecting in a true, non-clicked sense, the content and value of the games. So many publishers repeat the same, bland message when advertising new product. We believe our products (and developers/affiliates) deserve better than this. Creative games deserve creative advertising!"



"We always try to have a bit of fun. After all, isn't that what the industry's all about? Maybe it's been a bit puerile at times (the *Earthworm Jim* campaign for instance) but then again, so is much of the best British comedy, traditionally."

"We do still try to attract people's attention but these days we've moved away from the more shock/horror approach. This is somewhat passé and several other publishers have copied from us now! The *Resident Evil* campaign is a seminal work in so far as it's controversial by being shocking in a more understated/refined kind of way."

"As far as the Advertising Standards Authority are concerned, thank goodness they are there in order to prevent people like us going too far and offending public decency, and the British way of life!"

SEAN BRENNAN OF VIRGIN INTERACTIVE FEELS CONFIDENT THAT THEIR CAMPAIGNS ARE HARMLESS, AND JUST SUGGEST A MORE INNOVATIVE STYLE OF ADVERTISING THAN MANY OF THEIR INDUSTRY COMPETITORS.

Other Offenders

Virgin have had problems with other adverts – ie the *Doom II* campaign – but they aren't the only people to have had run-ins with the ASA. It was our old friends at Sega who produced probably the most heavily criticised advert of all, promoting the game *Virtua Racing* with the line: 'Score some speed from your local dealer.'

Psygnosis similarly got into bother for their *Wipeout* advert featuring a boy and girl sitting on a sofa, both bleeding heavily from the nose. They got into more trouble for sending out copies of the advert to trade magazine

Computer Trade Weekly after it had been banned. "The ASA felt we were still trying to use the advert through editorial coverage of it," says Glenn O'Connell from the Liverpool-based developers, "consequently we'd rather not comment."

Time Warner got it in the neck for their *Striker '96* campaign, featuring a photo of a woman's legs dangling in the air, inferring that she'd hanged herself.

The latest campaign to hit problems is *Resident Evil*, another offering from Virgin. This features an overhead view of a bath full of blood. Hard to see what all the fuss is about...



THE LATEST ADVERT FROM VIRGIN INTERACTIVE TO BRING A RAY OF SUNSHINE INTO THE LIVES OF THE BRITISH MORAL MINORITY. RESIDENT EVIL USES THE BLOODBATH MOTIF – SOME WOULD SAY THIS IS SUBTLE, THE ASA, HOWEVER, MAY NOT QUITE AGREE WITH THEM.



There are *those that do* and *those that don't*. Where do different video games companies stand on the issue of *dodgy adverts*?

Advertising Soundbites

Saints

Geoff Glendenning, Sony: "We don't do controversial advertising, we don't think it's necessary. The industry is moving away from shock ads, though one or two companies seem unable to give them up. Those adverts are okay for the core market, but now that the PlayStation is going mass market, controversial advertising is damaging. It sticks in parents' minds – they think that if an advert is shocking, the game will be too. That's okay for software manufacturers, but we have to look at it as a hardware manufacturer. We do have the power to ask to approve all adverts that involve the PlayStation, though we haven't thought that necessary until now. An advert for a PlayStation game is also an advert for the PlayStation brand, and if we get complaints about an advert I have to talk to those responsible. Sony's hardware department complained to us about Virgin's *Resident Evil* ad. In a ploy to gain extra time from the ASA, Virgin haven't mentioned in the ad either the 15 certification or the fact that it's a Virgin game. Parents could see the ad and think that's what all PlayStation games are like; if they'd included the certificate at least people would know that the industry was self-regulating. Adverts don't need to be like that. A lot of our own marketing is through more underground channels, like clubs and music festivals. We have a campaign this Christmas that's based on a documentary style. Advertising needs to be creative, but it doesn't need to shock."

ARE IMAGES OF A HUNG WOMAN APPROPRIATE FOR VIDEO GAMES? WARNER INTERACTIVE ASSUMED IT WAS FOR STRIKER '96. THE ASA, HOWEVER, DISAGREED.



Richard Eddy, Codemasters: "When we do our advertising we never go out with the intent of being controversial. Getting a little news piece in *Marketing Week* [advertising industry newspaper] seems to be the main point of doing a controversial campaign. We just aim to capture the imagination. If we were doing a game with lots of killing, we would not go for an advert with lots of killing. We'd go for something humorous that will stick in people's minds. We want something that makes people think and creates interest in the product. Controversial adverts can be rather bland."

Sinners

Spokesperson, Sega: "The people responsible for the *Virtua Racing* 'score some speed from your local dealer' advert no longer work for Sega. They were also responsible for the *Ecco the Dolphin* adverts that mentioned weed, speed and blow, and the 32X campaign that featured sexual references like 'slap this in your slot'. Those adverts did create a bit of fuss, within the company as well as outside. We won't be doing anything like that in the future. There have been three different sets of people doing Sega's marketing in recent years. The first lot did some really cool campaigns like the Pirate TV one. They left and the new lot came in and produced adverts packed with drug references. These people then all either left or were fired. The new people are not looking to be controversial. We just want to use advertising to show how good the games are. Has the industry moved on from shock tactic advertising? Not if you look at Virgin. Controversial advertising does lead to press coverage which can cause increased sales. Look at *Night Trap* [voyeuristic full motion video game] - it's really tame, like watching *Doctor Who*, but *The Daily Mail* described the game as outrageous and called for video games to be banned. As a result, we sold five times as many copies of the game as we were expecting. Tabloid controversy about adverts may help the individual company sell



an individual game, but the effect it has on the video games industry as a whole is less beneficial."

Simon Jeffrey, Virgin: "If the ASA ask us to do something, we do it. Most of our campaigns are short-lived - the *Doom II* campaign, for instance, had run its course by the time we were contacted about it. With *Command & Conquer*, they spoke to us on the second day of the campaign and we had Jacques Chirac covered up two or three days later. We think about what we do beforehand, we don't seek controversy just for the sake of it. Coverage of our ads in tabloid stories? Well, I guess it's PR for our product, as long as the game itself isn't being talked about negatively. It's PR's PR. Even if it's a crap game, people have been provoked into talking about it."



BOTH TEKKEN AND RESIDENT EVIL HAVE BEEN AT THE CENTRE OF SOME CONTROVERSY OVER THEIR ADVERTISING CAMPAIGNS.

What the papers say...

Video games trade mag *CTW* (*Computer Trade Weekly*) has been at the forefront of coverage of the controversy surrounding game adverts. The paper reported in May of this year that the ASA had upheld a complaint against Psychosis' bloody nose *WipeOut* ad. The complainant, from Suffolk, had seen the advert in a PlayStation magazine. Meanwhile, Virgin ran into problems when someone from Gloucestershire complained to the ASA that their *Screamer* ad "glorified dangerous driving". Also in trouble were, of all people, Sony. Their *Tekken* ad - boasting the tagline 'just like the arcade. Without the rent boys' - fell foul of a complaint from BACTA, the trade body for the arcade industry.

The trade body for the video games industry itself also doesn't appear happy with some of the recent games advertising. ELSPA chairman Roger Bennett was quoted in *CTW* recently, announcing that some software companies were "crossing lines of decency." Sean Brennan of Virgin's reply? "Does he really know what he's talking about?" Sean also confessed in the same magazine that the coverage Virgin

received as a result of the *Command & Conquer* tabloid furore "would have cost a fortune... you do things that you know will get you noticed and get you in the papers."

Taking a different tack was Marc Swallow of GT Interactive: "It's the easiest thing in the world to do a controversial ad, my three year old son can do them. They question is, how effective are they? How far do you go? Do you end up with a poster of the Pope jizzing in the Queen Mother's face? For *Quake* we decided some time ago not to go down the violent route even though that would have been the most easy."

The *Quake* adverts feature happy family scenes; certainly a step away from the ads that promoted previous games like *Doom II*. So is the industry really moving away from violent and dodgy adverts, or are people just taking up positions on different sides of the fence? With Sony holding a press conference on the subject within the past month, it seems that this is one issue that could be coming to a head very soon. The question is - will the head be covered in blood or flowers? To quote an empty billboard hoarding: 'Watch this space...'

CTW HAVE BEEN AT THE FOREFRONT OF REASONED COVERAGE OF THE ADVERTISING DEBACLE.





Here's one we made earlier...

The **ASA** offers an advice service to companies thinking of running **campaigns that might prove controversial**. We decided to put this service to the test with three fictional adverts for non-existent games. **What can we get away with?**

Hunter or Hunted?

This game is a very edgy shoot-em-up. In order to get this across, we've opted for a picture of a deer that's been shot, together with the slogan 'Bloody Hell'. That must be acceptable, surely?

"We'd receive complaints about an advert like that. A lot of complaints. People get very concerned when animal suffering is portrayed. I don't know whether that advert would be banned in every medium available, but we would definitely get complaints."

Come on, it's only a deer.

"People would react to it the same way they'd react if it was a picture of a human who'd been shot. Deer are cuddly things. People love *Bambi*. I can say with certainty, there would be a lot of complaints about that advert and we'd have to ask for it to be withdrawn."

What about the 'Bloody Hell' headline?

"The use of the word 'bloody' is not as unacceptable as it



used to be. It would depend on the medium you have chosen to advertise in. We have our own lists of swear words, based on our research, and our information suggests that 'bloody' is not a word that people are concerned about."

Amazon

This game features a tough female lead character. We've gone for a picture of a saucy gun-toting vixen and a slightly sexist PMT slogan. Is it a goer?

"There's been a rise recently in complaints about violent imagery in adverts and ads that show guns in any way. This changing moral climate can probably be attributed to recent events like Dunblane. Adverts that have a violent theme need to be very carefully considered in the current climate."

Okay, so the gun's a problem. What about the 'time of the month' line?

"It's very difficult to predict how people would react to that. The portrayal of women in adverts is still something the public are very sensitive about. Women might feel degraded by their treatment, and even if the advert isn't aimed at them, their views are still a consideration."



Magical Mystery Tour

The game of the Beatles album. To promote this title we're doing a whole series of adverts based on songs from the film. For The Fool on the Hill we've gone for a picture of John Major. On a hill. Clever, huh?

"That's very interesting indeed. The rules as they apply to the use of personalities in adverts are that the personality, whether they're a television star, politician or sportsman, mustn't be portrayed in an adverse way. Many people would consider politicians to be fair game."

Would John Major himself need to complain for you to investigate an advert?

"No. Look at the case of the Conservative Party's recent Tony Blair 'devil eyes' poster. We're investigating that on the basis of complaints from members of the public. Blair himself hasn't complained."

So can we get away with calling Major a fool?

"It's a matter of whether it's justified to portray John Major in an adverse way. As I've said, in certain contexts many people see politicians as being fair game."

That sounds a lot like a 'yes'.

"It's a 'maybe'."

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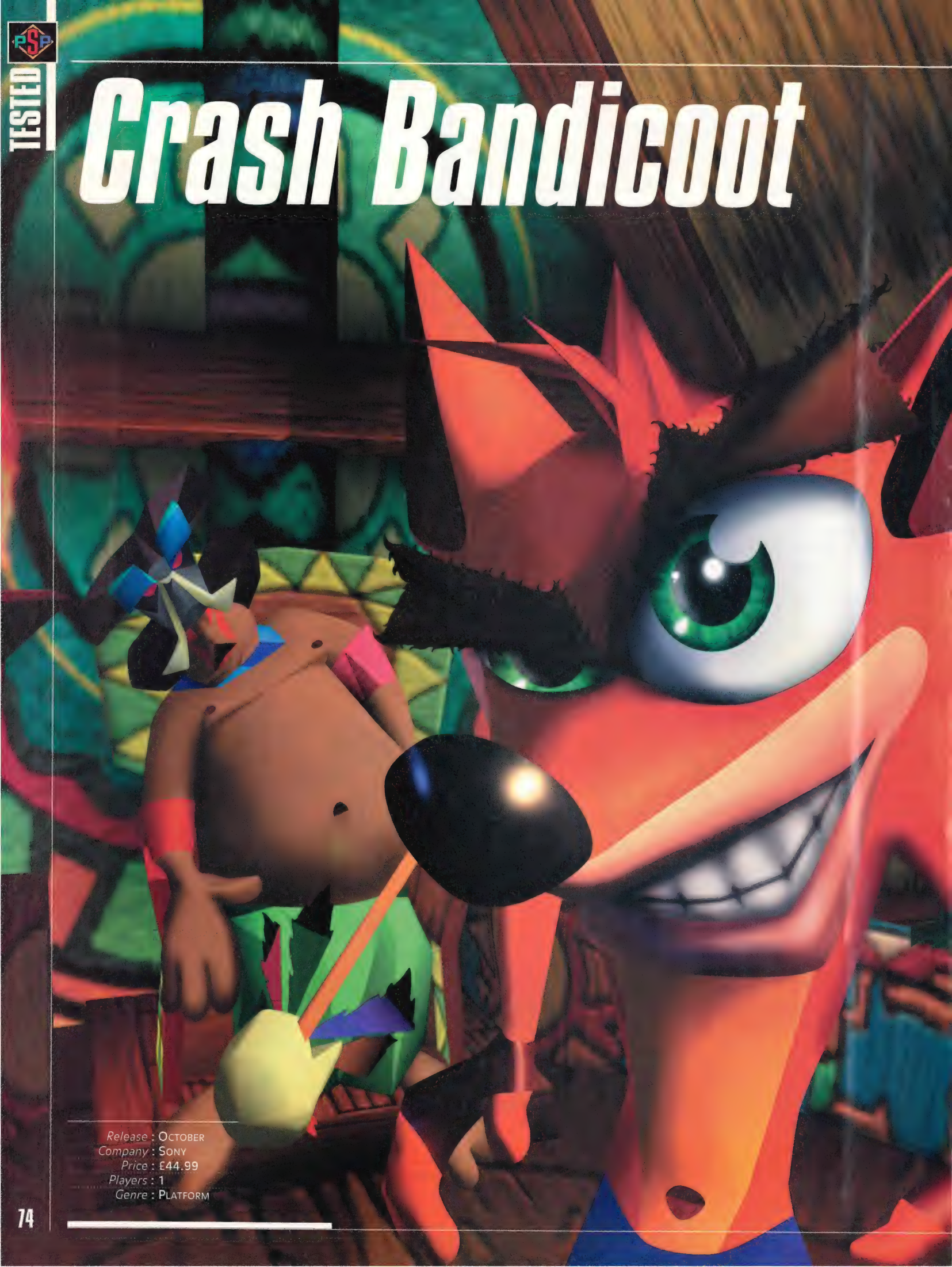
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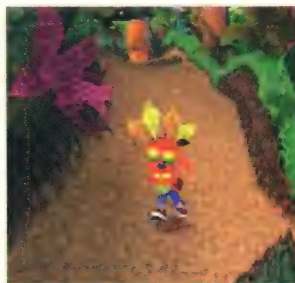
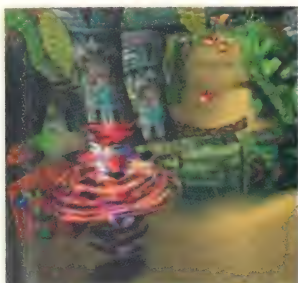
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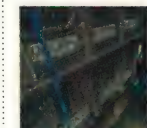
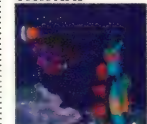
Crash Bandicoot

A large, vibrant illustration of Crash Bandicoot and Tawna Bandicoot. Crash is in the foreground, looking directly at the viewer with a wide, toothy grin. He has orange fur, large green eyes, and a black nose. Tawna is behind him, wearing a blue and white outfit with a large blue bow. They are in a jungle environment with green foliage and a wooden structure in the background.

Release : OCTOBER
Company : SONY
Price : £44.99
Players : 1
Genre : PLATFORM



AS LIGHTNING STRIKES ACROSS THE SKIES, DOCTOR NEO CORTX CONTINUES HIS TESTS ON HAPLESS ANIMALS. CRASH IS REJECTED FOR THE EVIL BLOKE'S ARMY, BUT RETURNS TO RESCUE TAWNA.



So this is it, Sony's answer to Mario and Sonic, the PlayStation's piece de resistance. It's the game the hallowed 32bit machine was apparently made for, the mould-breaking monster that could change the face of videogaming. It's not true, at least the bit about single-handedly redefining the platform genre isn't anyway. *Crash Bandicoot* is a collection of the best bits of platform history, a tribute to some of the greatest games from *Sonic the Hedgehog* to *Mario Bros*. It's also 3D, and it is this which is supposed to be the revolutionary bit.

But before we pass judgement on Naughty Dog's first-born, let's take a look at what it's all about. It's the story of zany hero Crash, a once-ordinary bandicoot transformed by the Mutate-O-Ray of evil geezer Dr Neo Cortex. The Doc, a genius who has used his creation to build an army of mutants with which to take over the world, has shackled up on a some tropical island and is experimenting on the

wildlife. While some of the tests have been successful, Crash is one of the failures. You see, Cortex's aim is to create intelligent animals with the strength of ten bears, not some bug-eyed marsupial who's lost his marbles, so naturally Crash has ended up in the reject bin. Obviously, he's a bit marked at being unceremoniously dumped, but his anger is fuelled even more by the fact that his beloved Tawna has been nabbed by bad boy Cortex. Crash wants her back and so begins the battle to destroy his creator...

CRASH LANDS

Okay, so now we know the story is cliched but what of the game? *Crash Bandicoot* isn't standard fare platform trash like *Rayman* and *Johnny Bazzookatone*, it's more innovative and considerably more enjoyable. While that pathetic pair were little more than left-to-right scrolling atrocities, *Crash Bandicoot* is blessed by the hand of 3D. Everything from Crash himself to the level scenery has a sense depth as yet unseen on any PlayStation platformer and, thankfully, it's more than just a cosmetic extra.



metic extra.

The thirty-odd levels are divided into three types. The most basic are the side-on stages in which scroll from left to right, interspersed occasionally by sections which move up and down. as Crash attempts to climb towering gates and other such obstacles. Visually more spectacular are the 3D scenes, levels that see Crash running in and out of the screen, avoiding Indiana

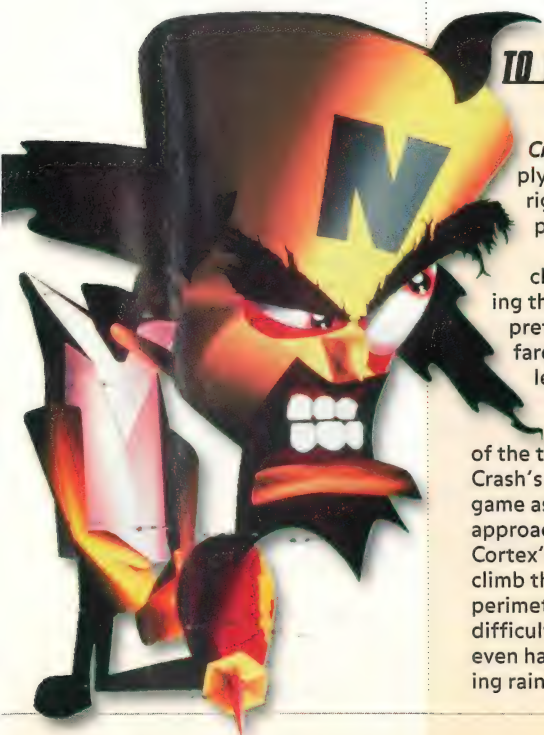
DURING SOME STAGES OF THE GAME, CRASH ENCOUNTERS A FORK IN THE ROAD. IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER AS HE CAN RETRACE HIS STEPS.

Jones-style rolling boulders in a desperate race against the clock. Lastly there are levels that encompass both styles of gameplay, moving in every direction. They offer the player as near to complete freedom as is possible in this style of game but unfortunately they are few and far between. Shame...

CRASH COURSES

The boy Bandicoot's quest for true love begins on the sandy shores of North Sanity Island, a tropical paradise unspoiled by mankind's natural tendency to destroy anything of beauty. It's a charming, serene land full of exotic blossoms, swaying palms trees and vibrant shrubs... but not for long. The tranquillity is shattered by the indigenous menagerie who, judging by their rabid demeanour, aren't particularly chuffed with Crash's impromptu arrival.

A fight breaks out then, but the victor is a foregone conclusion. Crash is a pretty



TO THE LEFT, TO THE RIGHT...

A lot of stages in *Crash Bandicoot* simply scroll from left to right, in traditional platform style.

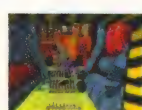
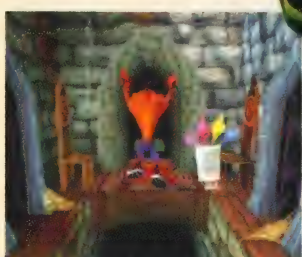
Therefore obstacles that appear during these stages are pretty much standard fare, with moving ledges, spikey poles and fireballs being just some of the things that threaten Crash's life. Later in the game as Crash cautiously approaches Doctor Cortex's castle he must climb the towering perimeter wall - a pretty difficult challenge made even harder by the pouring rain.



AS CRASH NEARS CORTEX'S LAIR SOME OF THE LEVELS START ENSHROUDED IN DARKNESS. HOWEVER, BY COLLECT THE AKU AKU FACE MASK A LITTLE LIGHT IS SHED ON THE PROBLEM. IT ONLY LASTS FOR A SHORT WHILE THOUGH.

ONE STEP FORWARD

The 3D levels are the most impressive to look at but are perhaps the most difficult to complete due to awkward perspective. As Crash either runs in or out of the screen, he must out-run tumbling boulders and leap across gaping pits. Later in the game he must cross rickety rope bridge and ride on the back of wild boars before entering the lair of bad bloke Doctor Cortex.



mean fighter with a dazzling array of attacks. He can jump on an enemy's head, he can spin them to death... um, that's about it. Yup, in traditional platform style the most popular method of dispensing with an enemy is to simply pounce on their bonce. A single bash is usually enough to eliminate the pesky critters, although the bigger beasties sometimes

need a little more persuading. Enter Crash's spin attack, a fierce tornado-like assault that bears more than a passing resemblance to the swirling whirlwind that is Taz. One spin and the enemy flies off into the distance, which doubles as another means of attack as anything in its path automatically eliminated.

BREAK POINTS

Aside from dispensing with the natives, Crash's leaps and bounds have another purpose – to crack open the bonus boxes scattered through each stage. They're everywhere, and contain one of a handful of useful goodies. The most common is the Wumpa fruit, an apple-like object that awards a free life for every one hundred collected. Some boxes contain the mask of witch doctor Aku Aku, which allows Crash to

sustain an additional hit before dying. Additionally, collect two and he can take two hits, while grabbing a third awards him with temporary invincibility.

Rare are extra life crates that, somewhat predictably, contain a 1-Up while those emblazoned with an exclamation mark act like switches, revealing sections of the levels that usually can't be reached. Bounce boxes will spring the Bandicoot high in the air, arrowed crates point towards hidden bonuses and any bonus decorated with a question mark holds a mystery gift. Again, these are usually Wumpa fruit but occasionally the object is more rewarding. Collect a portrait of either Tawna, Doctor Cortex or his sidekick N. Brio and they're stashed until the time Crash has collected three. This opens a por-



IT'S EASY TO COMPLETE THE LEVELS BUT WHAT ABOUT THE SECRET BITS? FIRST THE STAGE MUST BE FINISHED PERFECTLY...

THEN, WHEN CRASH HAS THE KEY OR THE GEMS, RETURN TO THE STAGE AND HOPEFULLY A SECRET SECTION WILL BE UNCOVERED.

SIMPLY SCOOP UP ALL THE EXTRA LIVES AND OTHER GOODIES, BEFORE JUMPING BACK ON THE GEM AND LEAVING VIA THE EXIT.



tal to the bonus round, a short but fruitful level blessed with countless extra lives and many other such important collectibles.

As well as the standard bonus boxes, there two very different crates that will crop up. A case containing TNT should be avoided at all costs as it explodes if Crash accidentally touches it. Sure, he has three seconds to escape the blast but a safer bet it to leave the bloody thing alone altogether. The check point bonus is more of a relief, allowing players to start from halfway through a level rather than having to return to the very beginning.

However, while these restart points are extremely useful for some stages, they prove pretty much redundant in others. The reason for this is because they are oddly spaced. An ideal place for a check point would be directly after a particularly nasty section of the game, thus minimising any tedious replaying of the same level. Instead a lot of the restart points are placed early on in a stage there are very few later on, so the player has endure vast chunks of a level time and time again, until they eventually complete the stage.

Unfortunately the same fault applies to the save game facility. The option to store a game on memory card is only given after a bonus stage, and again the more difficult bits of *Crash Bandicoot* must be repeatedly tolerated until solace materialises in the form of a password. Phew.



WHEN CRASH IS FOLLOWED BY THE WOODEN AKU AKU FACE MASK, HE SUSTAIN A SINGLE HIT WITHOUT DYING.



INSANE IN THE BRAIN

The 32 levels stretch across three islands, eventually climaxing in the lair of Doctor Neo Cortex. Before Crash reaches Tawna he must first dispatch Cortex's right-hand mutants, of which there are three. The first to attack is Incan chief Papu Papu, a suitably fat bloke complete with ridiculous headpiece and large pointy stick. Next up is Ripper Roo, one of Cortex's genetic mutations. Derived from a harmless kangaroo, the beast is now a deranged psycho fastened inside a strait jacket. It's not enough to hold him back though, as he lunges with razor sharp fangs and talons. Koala Kong is less energetic, staying back and lobbing enormous boulders. Crash can't reach him and so must hurl the rocks back at Kong before reaching cortex himself.

Each of the guardians hosts a stage of their own, but there are also some other levels that are a bit different from the norm. Early on in the game, Crash climbs atop a wild boar, riding the beast along a winding forest path.

IN YOUR FACE

And it's these 'into the screen' levels that look the most impressive. But then they would, because each is pre-rendered. Yep, Crash follows a preset path through the forest glade, although he is free to move at his own speed and can also move left and right to some degree. *Crash Bandicoot* doesn't offer



SOME BONUSES ARE HIDDEN BETWEEN BOXES OF TNT. ATTACK THESE CRATES AND CRASH IS BLOWN TO PIECES!

MEET TAWNA, THE OBJECT OF CRASH'S DESIRES. SHE IS THE ONLY REASON FOR CRASH TO RETURN TO CORTEX'S LAIR. THE SAP.



CORTEX'S COHORTS

Doctor Neo Cortex isn't the only bad guy Crash encounters throughout the game. Many of his warped creations haunt the Sanity islands, waiting for Crash to make his glorious entrance...



PAPU PAPU

The native chief lurks at the end of the first level, whacking Crash with a large pointy stick if he gets too close. Jump over his huge swing and bounce on the fat bloke's bonce.



KOALA KONG

Yeah he's a big bast', but he is easily brought down by tossing the rocks he throws back at him. Timing is crucial, waiting for the TNT to explode before spinning the boulders back from whence they came.

RIPPER ROO

Stay well away from this deranged kangaroo, he can only be killed by detonating the boxes of TNT as they float past. Remember, keep on the move and don't ever fall in the water - Crash can't swim a stroke!



PINSTRIP POTOROO

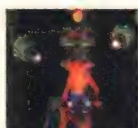
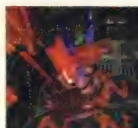
This gun-totting gangster is a complete git to beat. Keep on the move to avoid his hail of gun-fire, remembering to stay right behind him before bouncing on his head. It's not easy, and he takes six hits, so stay frosty, Crash.



NITRUS BRIO

Doctor Cortex's right-hand geezer, N. Brio, is a scientist with psychotic tendencies. Mixing chemicals in his lab, the crazed professor creates a weird blob creature that homes in on Crash. Avoid at all costs!

(RIGHT) AS CRASH MAKES HIS WAY TOWARDS THE CORTEX CASTLE, HE MUST VENTURE THROUGH UNDERGROUND SEWERS CONTAMINATED BY TOXIC WASTE.



the complete freedom of, say, *Mario 64*, and is restricted by to moving within the tight boundaries of each level rather than having a vast 3D area to explore. As mentioned before though, some of the scenes become more complex as Crash enters ancient temples and desolate ruins. Reminiscent of the opening scene from *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, Crash must avoid spear traps, dodge fireballs, jump over falling platforms and leap between moving pillars to reach the exit.

Once a level has been completed a path leading to the next automatically opens. Crash can return to any previously completed stage, to stock up on extra lives and also to perfect the level. Manage to reach the exit without losing a life and smashing every bonus box and a precious gem will appear. Now, when he re-enters the same stage a hidden gem path should materialise, leading to a secret

N. Brio in his laboratory.

Conceptually then, *Crash Bandicoot* is quite superb. However, some of the execution isn't quite right. One of the underlying faults with the game is the perspective. Some sections of *Crash Bandicoot*, especially those which scroll away from the screen, are made difficult not by clever design but because it's so damn hard to gauge accurate jumps. Some stages require pixel-perfect joystick prowess – this is practically impossible when you can't tell whether the ledge you're leaping to is slightly below or off to one side. To find out, take the plunge – if you're lucky Crash makes the jump, otherwise a life is lost and it's back to the beginning of the level. There's too much of a hit-and-miss element to *Crash Bandicoot*, too many points when he isn't quite responsive enough and lives are lost as a result.

That said, *Crash Bandicoot*

Opinion *Crash Bandicoot* is a visual showcase for the PlayStation but sadly lacks all the hallmarks of a classic. At times it can be extremely frustrating, but this is large down to awkward perspectives rather than level design. However, it's considerably better than previous PlayStation platformers like *Rayman*, but by no means perfect – bordering on 'very good' rather than sitting comfortably in the classic corner of Game Heaven. AS

scene. Keys are found in exactly the same way, and again uncover a previously hidden bonus screen.

SOMETHING OLD?

But, if you've played many platform games, all of this will seem strangely familiar. In all honesty *Crash Bandicoot* doesn't offer anything new apart from the fact it's all in pseudo-3D. However, the game has been implemented exceedingly well, from the basic level design to the execution of some of the puzzles. There are some truly impressive sequences, like the first time the huge boulders start rumbling towards the screen and, later in the game, when Crash first meets

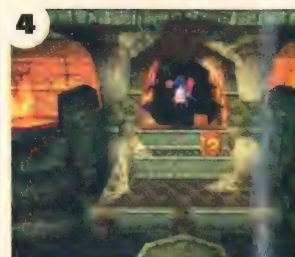
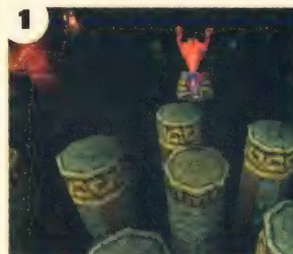
is still a corking game.

Visually it's far ahead of anything else in the genre thanks to incredibly detailed and varied backgrounds. It's just a shame it isn't quite as instinctive as the Mario games, otherwise *Crash Bandicoot* could have been the definitive

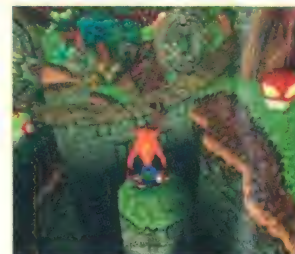
SHAKE IT ALL ABOUT

Stages in which Crash can move in pretty much any direction are scarce, probably because they so difficult. They are essentially the same at the flatter 2D stages, although the level stretches

in every direction, including up and down! Nasty surprises to watch out for are bats that swarms from the ceiling and also snakes that pop up from the ground and gobble up Crash!



PlayStation platformer that everyone seemed to want it to be.



TIMING IS ESSENTIAL, ESPECIALLY WHEN JUMPING PAST THESE HUGE ROLLING STONES. MIS-TIME A JUMP, AND CRASH IS FLATTENED.



PSP RATING...

Graphics : 94
Animation : 90
Sound FX : 86
Music : 88
Lastability : 79
Playability : 80

86



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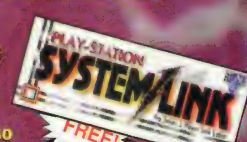
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Genre : SHOOT 'EM UP

Final Doom

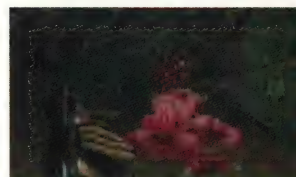


WHILE THE MONSTERS IN FINAL DOOM ARE ALL FAMILIAR FROM THE ORIGINAL GAME, THEIR SHEER NUMBERS MAKE GETTING PAST THEM SOMETHING OF A HARDER BATTLE THAN BEFORE.



First there was *Doom*. Then there was another one. Then there was an ultimate one. Then there was one on the PlayStation. After about 427 different versions on every format that could handle it, *Doom* is ready to breath its last. But not before one *Final Doom*. But things have moved on – *Doom*'s bouncing boy-child, *Quake*, is now out on the PC, and the rather sexy *Resident Evil* has shown us exactly how fantastic a 3D shooty adventure can be. *Doom* can't compete with these state of the art groovers... can it? Surely *Doom* has had its day, so why has it been dragged out of retirement like the aging and expanding *Star Trek* cast for yet another sequel. Isn't anything sacred any more?

But hey, we're not here to judge the commercial motives of the software publishers concerned. We're here to judge *Final Doom*. Does it indeed deserve to be sent to hell for being a rip-off, or should it be consigned to heaven for being a fitting tribute to the game that



spawned a legend? So, this is it, then. This is your lot for *Doom* on the PlayStation. The burning question is whether or not this is worth forking out for if you already have the original, or indeed one of the legion of games 'inspired' by it. So is it?

FIRE

Wait a minute. Perhaps you've never even heard of *Doom*. It is therefore our duty to explain to you exactly what it's like. It's like this: You are a man with a varying number of guns who shoots lots and lots of monsters. Loads of them in fact. You can alternatively blow them up, punch them in the face, fry them or turn them into lumps. The gist of what I'm getting at is that you kill things. Occasionally you may have to pull a switch or something to open a door. It's not very taxing. In some levels



you may have to collect keys to access other parts of the level. This means that even some small levels can actually be far more complex than first appears. Luckily a map is provided to help you navigate your way around, but this only shows areas that you have already visited.

There are several types of monsters to decimate, ranging from feeble rifle totting zombies, to gigantic mutant brain spiders with huge rotating cannons and big spiky teeth. You can also choose to murder a friend.

GO TO HELL! (NO, REALLY)



1 HERE IS A TELEPORTER. TO PROGRESS TO SOMEWHERE ELSE ON THIS LEVEL I MUST USE IT. WHAT HORRORS WILL I FIND WHEN I EMERGE? I HOPE IT'S NOT LOADS OF MONSTERS.



2 WELL, BLOW ME DOWN. IT IS A LOAD OF MONSTERS. OKAY, JUST HOW SHALL I DEAL WITH THEM. SHALL I SIMPLY MOVE PAST THEM IN THE SHADOWS, LIKE A STEALTHY ALLEY CAT?



3 NO. I'LL JUST RUN AT THEM SCREAMING, SHOOTING WILDLY AND HOPING I DON'T GET SHOT TOO MUCH. THAT SHOULD SORT THEM OUT. THE CADS. THAT WILL TEACH THEM.



4 UH-OH. THIS SOLDIER SHOTS ME FROM HIS LOFTY PERCH. THE SWINE! SHALL I FORGIVE HIM, OR SLAUGHTER HIM IN COLD BLOOD? THE ANSWER, BY NOW, SHOULD BE OBVIOUS.

AS THE VARIOUS SCREEN SHOTS SCATTERED AROUND HERE DISPLAY, ONE OF FINAL DOOM'S BIGGEST IMPROVEMENTS OF THE ORIGINAL DOOM IS THE USE OF NEW LOCATIONS AND BACK-GROUNDS. STARSAPES, BLOOD RED CAVES, AND RAGING SCARLET SKIES ALL VIE FOR POSITION WITH THE MORE FAMILIAR LAVA PITS, STEEL CONTROL ROOMS AND GREEN ACID BATHS FROM THE PREVIOUS GAME. MANY OF THESE BACKGROUNDS WERE INSPIRED BY THE WADs TAKEN FROM THE INTERNET, CREATED BY DOOM'S VAST LEGION OF 'NET FANS. WILLIAMS HAVE BEEN MORE THAN HAPPY TO INCORPORATE THESE IDEAS INTO THEIR OFFICIAL GAME, AND THE RELEASE OF FINAL DOOM IS MORE THAN LIKELY TO INSPIRE LOADS MORE HOME-MADE DOOM LEVELS. DESPITE THE GAME'S TITLE, THERE ALWAYS REMAINS THE POSSIBILITY THAT IN A YEAR OR SO, WE MAY SEE EVEN MORE OF THESE ON THE PLAYSTATION.



mediaeval style buildings to the very depths of Hell itself, complete with glowy lava and Robert Maxwell.

The action is viewed from a first person perspective, and it's quite pretty in a sort of not hugely flashy and not very next generationesque sort of way. You see, the levels aren't actually in 3D. It's a trick. You can't have one room at ground level, then one on top of it. You can't even jump. The graphics work well enough to give a convincing impression of a 3D world though, and the levels are usually designed in such a way that you don't generally notice any way. No



multi-storey office blocks here - weird tunnels then scary big rooms are the order of the day, along with a hardly subtle satanic theme. There are pentagrams and goat skulls a-plenty, and your opponents are apparently the evil minions of the lord of ultimate darkness himself.

So then, a dark, violent, and often extremely scary game that has become loved the world over. However, the world could be wrong. Trust us to tell you if you really need *Final Doom*.

BRIMSTONE

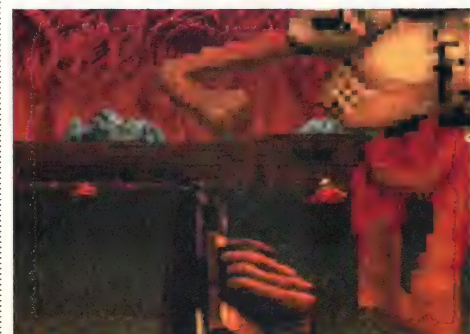
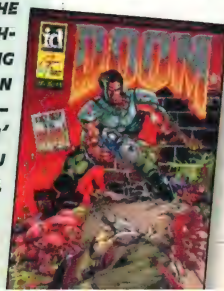
But first: where these new levels came from. After *Doom* came out on the PC loads of level editors followed. Soon



BULL DEMONS STILL GO INVISIBLE WHEN YOU LEAST EXPECT IT.

thousands of *Doom* players were designing their own levels and distributing them: either via the Internet or on floppy disks. Called WADs the demand for these files grew to such a level that CD-Roms featuring hundreds of such levels became available, and everyone went rather *Doom*-loopy. What Williams has done is collect together some of the very best of these levels and combined them with some specially designed levels from the creators of *Doom*, id. This means that you are forking out the most part of £50 for what PC owners could copy off

YOU MAY ALREADY HAVE NOTICED THE **FREE DOOM** COMIC WITHIN THIS ISSUE OF PLAYSTATION PLUS. PRODUCED BY id AND GT INTERACTIVE, ISN'T IT LOVELY? WHAT'S MORE, THIS IS JUST A TINY FRACTION OF THE MILLION AND ONE DOOM TIE-INS, RANGING FROM FULL-LENGTH NOVELS TO THE FORTH-COMING MOTION PICTURE - OR 'FILM' TO YOU AND ME.





5 OH HELL! IT'S ONE OF THOSE HUGE HELL KNIGHTS, WHO CHUCK GREEN PLASMA. TIME FOR A CLEVER STRATEGY. WHAT CLEVER MIND TRICKS WILL I USE? HOW SHALL I OUTWIT HIM?



6 OBVIOUSLY BY RUNNING AWAY VERY QUICKLY INDEED. I HOPE HE HASN'T SEEN ME. I HOPE HE DOESN'T FOLLOW ME. WHAT IF HE SMELLS ME? WHAT IF HEARS MY PANICKED BREATHING? SOB.



7 THANKFULLY, BEFORE HE FINDS ME, I REALISE I HAVE A RATHER HUGE PLASMA GUN WHICH I CAN USE TO DECIMATE ALL IN MY PATH. HURRAH FOR ME. TAKE THAT YOU BIG LUMMOX.



8 VICTORY TO ME. HIS DEAD BODY LIES MOTIONLESS, TESTAMENT TO MY ENORMOUS SKILL. I WILL NOT BE DEFEATED. WHO DARES TO EVOKE MY WRATH NEXT? I AM THE KING. ETC.

friends for free, or download from the Internet, along with comedy WADs which include Daleks for baddies and a version which replaces the *Doom* regulars with *The Simpsons*.

So *Final Doom* isn't any different to the best-part-of-a-year-old *Doom*, which is barely advanced from the 1993 PC original. The only (admittedly very important) change is that this particular incarnation's levels are all new designs that aren't in any other version. This means that the success of this game is riding solely on the design of the levels – risky, as *Hexen*, *Dark Forces*, and *Quake* will make their presence felt on the PlayStation. These levels were going to have to be pretty fantastic to make *Final Doom* a worthy purchase.

SULPHUR

Happily enough, these new levels are great. They are trickier than in the original, but they are also more enjoyable to play; partly due to the fact that the maps are less like little mazes and more like proper places.

There is less fiddling about with switches and more shotgun/ demon action than in its previous incarnation, and the maps are bigger too (this is important, as the number of levels has dropped from 59 to around 30). There is no continuing story line as there was in previous *Doom* incarnations, but this is no great loss as they were always completely irrelevant.

The clever lighting effects are still there, and along with

Opinion Great levels, but the gameplay hasn't otherwise changes at all since we last looked at it. You know, if you want a bunch of top new *Doom* levels and you have played *Doom* before, or if you've never played it before, then why not? It's great! However, you may want to hold back until the next wave of 3D stunners. TC



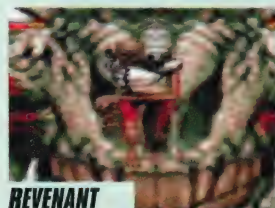
LOTS OF NEW BACKGROUNDS AND SKIES, BUT THE SAME OLD GREAT KILLING DEVICES LIKE THE CHAINSAW REASSURES YOU, THIS IS STILL DOOM.

BARONS OF HELL

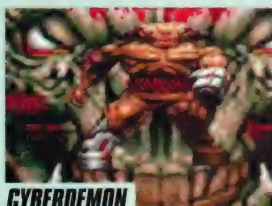
Here, for the final time, are some of the more powerful members of the *Doom* cast. What next for them? Guest spots on chat shows or the National Lottery per chance?



HELL KNIGHT



REVENANT



CYBERDEMON



BARON OF HELL



ARACHNOTRON

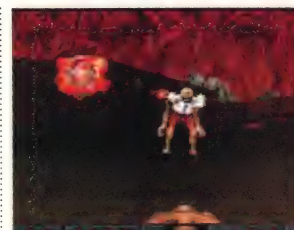


SPIDERMASTERMIND

the the spooky music soundtrack and gruesome sound effects, a very foreboding atmosphere is created. This combined with the difficulty of the game means that it isn't really suitable for kids. And don't panic if you fancy playing the game but think you're rubbish: the first difficulty level is perfect for *Doom* novices

Okay, now let's see. Overall, that's less, but far better levels. Well, sadly that seems to be it. It really is that simple: If you loved *Doom* and want more of the same, you should buy this. If you have never played *Doom* and like the sound of it, you should buy this. If you hated *Doom* you shouldn't go anywhere near this. Unless you're some sort of masochist, of course.

If you're not fantastically wealthy however, you may want to wait for something even bigger and better to come along. *Disruptor* and *Dark Forces* in particular look very impressive, which means that unless you are already 100% certified *Doom* bonkers, you may well want to hold onto your cash.

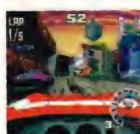


PSP RATING...

Graphics : 87
Animation : 88
Sound FX : 88
Music : 86
Lastability : 90
Playability : 92

89

TO ACCESS THE MIRROR MODE, TURN THROUGH 180° AT THE START OF THE RACE AND DRIVE THE OPPOSITE WAY ROUND THE CIRCUIT. SOON THE DRONE CAR WILL FOLLOW AND THE RACE IS ON.



Burning Road



Even with the advent of next generation gaming arcade racers still follow an age-old formula. From *Pole Position* to *Ridge Racer Revolution*, the aim of the game is quite simply to come first. Blocky congratulation screens have obviously been replaced by the opportunity to race hidden cars on secret tracks but little else has changed. Even more adventurous entries into the genre, such as *Motor Toon Grand Prix* and *WipEout*, have failed to break the mould, following the tradition of including practice laps and the conventional championship.

Burning Road is no different. Well, not initially, anyway. Like most things in life it borrows from the classics, so if Ocean Colour Scene nab their riffs from the Beatles then *Burning Road* has *Daytona USA* as its inspiration. It's by no means an identical rip-off though, but there's enough similarities to



easily draw comparisons between the two. Additionally, subtle hints of other classic racing games shine through, with elements of *Sega Rally* and *Ridge Racer* complementing *Burning Road*'s established gameplay. The result is an absorbing amalgamation of classic arcade racing and 32bit presentation equal to that of *Ridge Racer Revolution*.

So *Burning Road* is simply a mix of all the best bits from all the best racing games – no bad thing considering it's all the better for it. It's based on a tried and tested formula which means that although *Burning Road* offers few sur-

prises, it's fun to play and will probably grab the attention of virtual boy racers.

LEARNING CURVES

Like *Ridge Racer Revolution*, *Burning Road* has three tracks of varying difficulty on offer. While each of them is tackled in turn in the full-blown championship mode, they can be selected in any order by opting for the practice lap. The practice mode is essentially a one-off race which allows players to familiarise themselves with the twists and turns of each circuit. The tracks are littered with the same obstacles as the championship circuits

and the opposing cars are just as ruthless, but rather than progressing to the next course after completing a race, the player is left to mull over the statistics of their previous performance. Again, these statistics are pretty much useless in the practice mode but they become far more important when racing in the championship.

As well as using the practice option to learn the layout of the circuits, it's also the perfect opportunity to learn the driving patterns of the computer-controlled cars, of which there are seven all battling for a place on the winner's podium. At the easi-



Release : SEPTEMBER '96
Company : FUNSOFT
Price : £44.99
Players : 1-2
Genre : RACING

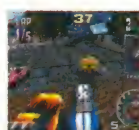
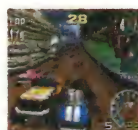
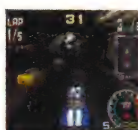
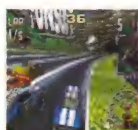
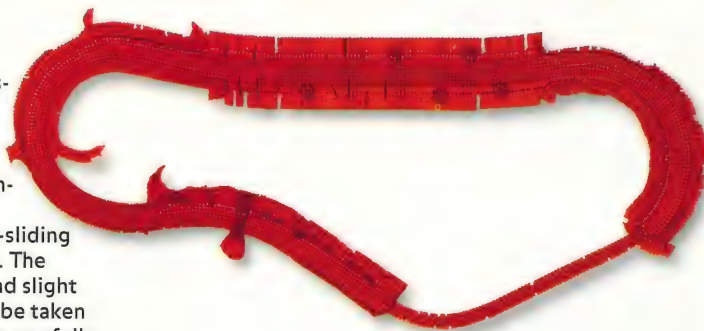


(BELOW) CHOOSE BETWEEN FOUR VEHICLES, FROM THE PICK-UP TRUCK, TO THE SPEEDY SALOON CARS AND SOUPED UP VAN.



BEGINNER

This is the first circuit, so it's obviously a cinch. With a little practice it's possible to complete the track without lifting off the accelerator, power-sliding around the corners. The opening straight and slight left-hander should be taken at full speed before carefully lining up the jumps leading into the final bend.



est setting they are the equivalent of the Sunday driver, choosing to cruise through the race rather than speed. Select the default medium difficulty and they become a little more aggressive, driving slightly faster and tending to ram through the pack rather than swerve. However, in the hardest mode the drone cars are bitches. Screaming around the corners with the the accelerator pedal flat against the floor, they're even more belligerent than before, adhering to the racing line

even if it means ploughing through waves of other cars in the process!

JOYRITING

Whichever mode is selected, the drones adapt their speed to roughly match the performance of the player. Therefore skilled drivers will find it difficult to streak ahead while novice racers will never be left behind, the computer cars constantly hounding the player however well they perform. However, a change of car will often ease the pressure of the ever-chasing

opposition drones.

There are four vehicles available: two stock cars, a pick-up truck and a souped-up van. The default blue car is the best all-round vehicle, offering a balance between top speed and handling. The red saloon car is extremely fast but lacks grip, while the pick-up truck is exactly the opposite – it sticks to the tarmac but is comparatively slow. The last car, the customised van, is powered by a monster engine which gives it the best top speed of all. Better still, it handles fairly well too. Surprisingly, *Burning Road* doesn't feature any hidden vehicles. Although this is by no means a devastating omission, but considering *Ridge Racer Revolution* has fifteen cars in total, *Burning Road* seems sadly lacking in comparison.

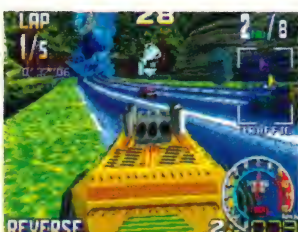
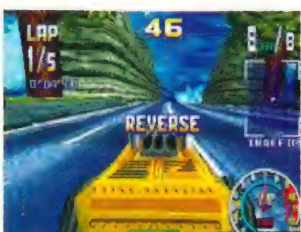
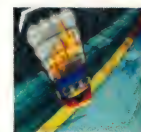
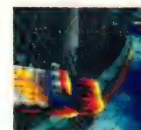
CAR-RECORDER

Having clambered inside a car you're then rolled out on the circuit. Starting at the back of the pack the obliga-

tory countdown ticks past before all hell breaks loose and the race begins. Selecting either manual or automatic gears, the cars slowly pulls away from the starting grid and into the fray. The screen layout is remarkably similar to that of *Daytona USA*, with the rev counter and speedometer in one corner and the traffic gauge lining one side. This gadget basically replaces the rear-view mirror, allowing drivers to see cars to either side and also directly behind them. The current position of the car and the lap times are also displayed, and remain in view no matter which camera angle, of which there are five, is chosen.

Of the five views, three are chase car cams, hovering at varying distances above and behind the car. These give the driver a better perception of any nearby cars and obstacles, and are therefore easier to play with. Climbing inside the car and looking out over the bonnet or getting close to the ground for the super-fast bumper cam, the two in-car camera angles are more demanding, the reason for which is simple. They offer a tremendous feeling of speed and therefore weaving through a pack of swarming cars can prove quite disorientating, espe-

KABOOM! TOO MANY TENNANTS EXTRAS CAN SERIOUSLY DAMAGE YOUR HEALTH, ESPECIALLY IF YOU'RE STEAMING ALONG AT 250 KPH IN A HUGE PICK-UP TRUCK. LUCKILY, THE AIR BAG INFLATES AND SO THE RACE CONTINUES...



(RIGHT) OBSTACLES SUCH AS OIL DRUMS LITTER EACH OF THE TRACKS. ALTHOUGH THEY DON'T PHYSICALLY CAUSE ANY DAMAGE, THEY TEMPORARILY SLOW DOWN THE CAR.



(BELOW) THE EXCELLENT REPLAY FACILITY SHOWS THE PREVIOUS RACE IN ITS ENTIRETY, FROM LOADS OF DIFFERENT ANGLES.



SEPARATED AT BIRTH?

THE SIMILARITY BETWEEN BURNING ROAD AND DAYTONA USA IS QUITE ASTONISHING. THE SCREEN LAYOUT IS ALMOST IDENTICAL AND EVEN THE CARS AND VIEWS BEAR A STRONG RESEMBLANCE TO SEGA'S CLASSIC COIN-OP. SMALL HINTS OF SEGA RALLY ARE ALSO PRESENT IN THE GAME.

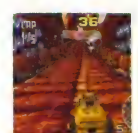
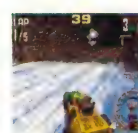
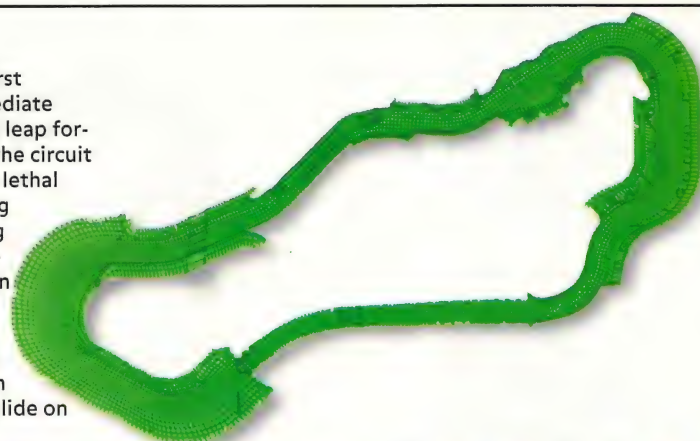


WHICH IS WHICH? BURNING ROAD BEARS MORE THAN A PASSING RESEMBLANCE TO DAYTONA USA AND SEGA RALLY.



ADVANCED

Compared to the first course, the intermediate track is a surprising leap forward in difficulty; the circuit plagued with some lethal corners and winding bends. The opening chicane is challenging but can be taken at full speed. Even trickier though is the long icy hairpin – remember to slam on the brakes and slide on that snow!



Seconds later a freak blizzard fills the screen, covering the tight hairpin in a thick layer of firmly-packed snow. The bend must be taken slowly as the rear end of the vehicles swings out all too easily, sending the car spinning towards the rock wall that lines the circuit.

The expert circuit is amazingly void of obstacles, the challenges stemming from the tight corners and winding chicanes. That said, a sudden downpour of rain floods the track, drastically reducing the grip of the tyres just when its needed – approaching a dangerous right-hand bend. Again, take the corner too fast and the car will career out of control, smashing into the side railings. Cars sustain damage during any crash, whether it's with an obstacle or another vehicle. Gradually the bonnet twists and the wheels start to buckle, although damage hardly affects the performance of the car. Instead the player is penalised after the race, as points are deducted for wrecked vehicles.

CHEQUERED FLAG

This is where *Burning Road* differs from other racing games. Rather than awarding points purely for finishing the race in first position,

the scores are based on the driver's performance. High scores are notched up by finishing each of the races while avoiding damage and being one of the first three to cross the finish line. Therefore it's possible for a driver to score more points in third place than someone who takes the chequered flag, simply by avoiding any damage to the car. A driver's performance is summarised at the end of each race, although more important is the qualifying time for each track.

To progress to the next race, driver's don't necessarily have to finish in first place, but must qualify inside the track record. This is no easy task but succeed and access is granted to the three hidden tracks. Admittedly they aren't completely new circuits, just mirror images of the existing three tracks, but at the very least they offer much needed longevity and also give the driver a goal to aim for.

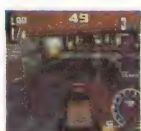
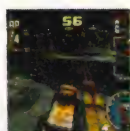
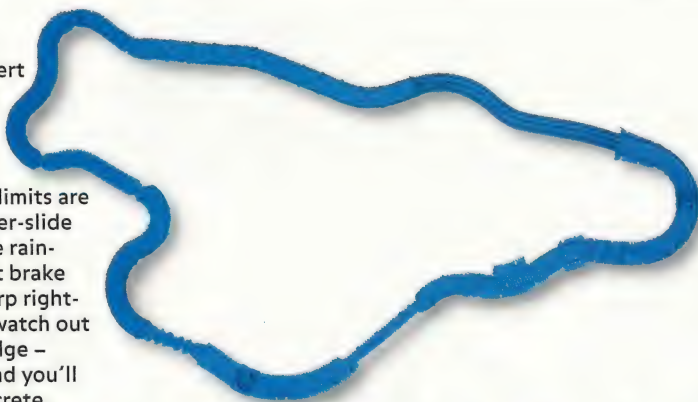
WINTER OR LOSER?

Okay then. *Burning Road* is packed with all the best bits of *Daytona USA*, *Sega Rally* et al, but adopts a unique approach to accessing the hidden tracks. And that's it? Not quite. Like countless racing games before it, *Burning Road* features a two-player



EXPERT

Strangely, the expert track is slightly easier to negotiate than the advanced circuit although the time limits are much tighter. Power-slide around most of the rain-soaked corners but brake heavily for the sharp right-hand bends. Also watch out for the narrow bridge – slide out too far and you'll crash into the concrete.



(LEFT) THIS CLOSE-UP OF THE VAN'S REAR WHEEL SHOWS SEVERE BUCKLING. THIS COMES AS A RESULT OF TOO MANY CRASHES AND THUS AFFECTS THE VEHICLE'S HANDLING.



THIS TREACHEROUS HAIRPIN IS MADE CONSIDERABLY MORE DIFFICULT BY ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS. BRAKE!

link-up option. Already you can race head-to-head at the speed of sound in *WipeOut* and drive an old banger in *Destruction Derby*, now it's time to climb inside a modified speedster and experience pure arcade racing without being constantly dogged by over-enthusiastic drone cars. Of course, *Burning Road* is brilliant fun in the two-player mode and the challenge of a human opponent is always more appealing than the predictability of the computer car, but surprisingly the solo game is just as enjoyable as a two-player romp.

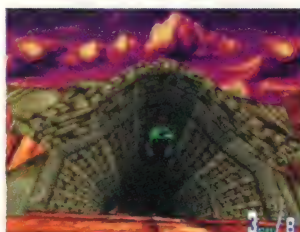
As a straightforward arcade racing game *Burning Road* ranks alongside *Ridge Racer Revolution* for sheer entertainment. Admittedly it doesn't boast all the extra cars and circuits, and lacks the time trial and various secret modes of Namco's classic, but at the very least it's an attractive alternative.

Visually *Burning Road* is as good *Ridge Racer Revolution* and features some cool effects such as the pouring rain and drifting snow, but it's the sheer speed that really impresses. Imagine power-sliding with the speedo touching 250 kilometres per hour, with the windows open and trashy techno blaring from the CD player – now is that cool or what?



Opinion Facing fierce competition from the already-established *Ridge Racer Revolution*, *Burning Road* is thankfully well-endowed in terms of gameplay and graphical finesse and is therefore easily capable keeping up with Namco's racing classic. Instinctive controls ensure the game's instant appeal holds out, but the lack of tracks and cars counts against its longevity. Overall, *Burning Road* is pretty darn good then, just don't expect any surprises.

AS



PSP RATING...

Graphics : 90
Animation : 88
Sound FX : 83
Music : 85
Lastability : 85
Playability : 89

88



Blam!

Machinehead



es, it's that age old story of a nutty scientist who creates a horrible virus that decimates the world. Those wacky scientists, eh? Can't take them anywhere. If it's not M. Bison and his dabbling with genetics, or the evil sod who used such abilities to revert Bub and Bob to dinosaur status, it's any number of game baddies who have created a super weapon from a few handy materials and are now holding the world to ransom. In Core Design's *Blam! Machinehead*, though, it's time to redress the balance and strike back on behalf of scientists in video games. As such, cast as a rather dubi-

ously proportioned lady scientist (helped along by a rather powerful rocket bike/suit combination) only you can save the world by killing everyone in sight. You must also deal with your irritating and hideously deformed master. In a twisted world which resembles a cross between the garden scenes in *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids* and the inside of Donald Pleasance in *Fantastic Voyage*, you must journey to the centre of the evil scientist's foul lair (as opposed to Mr Pleasance's bowel), so you can blow his head off or something.

There are four different worlds, each with a different graphical style. The first world is a city ravaged by the deadly virus, and it is populated by evil zombies, mutant spiders, and lethal rocket launchers. The second world is pretty similar, the third world is frozen wasteland, and the forth and final world is set in the scientist's mutat-

ed hive and laboratory. With big spiders in it. The action is shown from a stunning full screen first person view-point, and rather than expanding and shrinking pixels, the baddies are made up of polygons.

This means that no-matter how close you get to them they don't go all horrible and blocky. The graphics engine is also impressive due to the lighting which is very pretty and atmospheric. This is probably the best ever graphics engine on the PlayStation, easily beating the likes of *Krazy Ivan* and at least equalling *Tunnel B1*.

DETECTIVE

Initially the game is very confusing as you try are orient yourself. Luckily the controls are simple, and even though there are loads of different buttons to do things you soon feels at home. Wander around you discover things called "reality warpers" (or something) that just act as switches. They look pretty though, so we'll let them off. Finding the keys and activating these opens up new parts of the level for you to explore, but this means that even more monsters can get to you. To defend yourself you have an extremely large

**EVEN THE
PLAYER'S
DEATH
RESULTS IN
SOME ATTRAC-
TIVE GRAPHICS
- NOT MUCH
RECOMPENSE
THOUGH.**



Release : OCTOBER
Company : CORE DESIGN
Price : £44.99
Players : 1
Genre : SHOOT 'EM UP



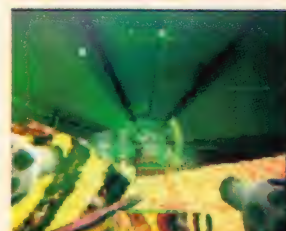


EXTREME CARNAGE ENSUES AS YOU UTILISE THE FULL FORCE OF YOUR ARMED AND FULLY OPERATIONAL SPEEDER-BIKE -COME-BOMB. THE FLAME EFFECTS, SHOWN HERE, ARE VERY IMPRESSIVE INDEED, ADDING TO BLAM! MACHINE-HEAD'S OVER-ALL EXCELLENCE IN THE GRAPHICS DEPARTMENT.



YOU LIGHT UP MY LIFE

The lighting effects are so very, very nice. You know when, in films, the camera looks at the sun or something, and you get those blobby bits of light? Well, you get the same thing here. Also the beams of light given out by things are very pretty too. But you don't have to take my word for it: examine these screenshots, and prepare to be amazed.



arsenal comprising of a meaty pair of chain guns that never run out of ammo, a flamethrower and a rocket launcher, which can launch regular and homing missiles. The baddies are very tough, but when you have pumped enough ordinance into them they explode very satisfyingly. Not just the baddies blow up either – most of the scenery can and does explode spectacularly. When things blow up the lighting is used to full effect, and it really makes a difference to your vision if you are standing in front of the remains of a burning missile launcher. Some of the enemies use weird energy rays that make things hard to make out (as well as kill you).

The next thing you have to do on the first level is find and destroy a bunch of cocoons that are stopping a train's generator working. Once you have destroyed

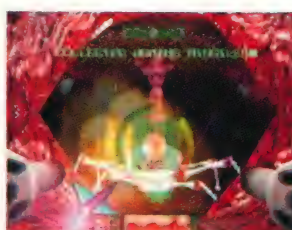


these you have to activate the train and follow it to the end of the level. This would be easy if it wasn't for the near constant barrage of enemies that make you're life a misery, and then kill you. Thank your godfathers for the three selectable difficulty levels. You also have to find lots of cunningly hidden keys. If you make it to the second level you must guide the train around a tortuous maze, flicking switches to make sure it goes the right

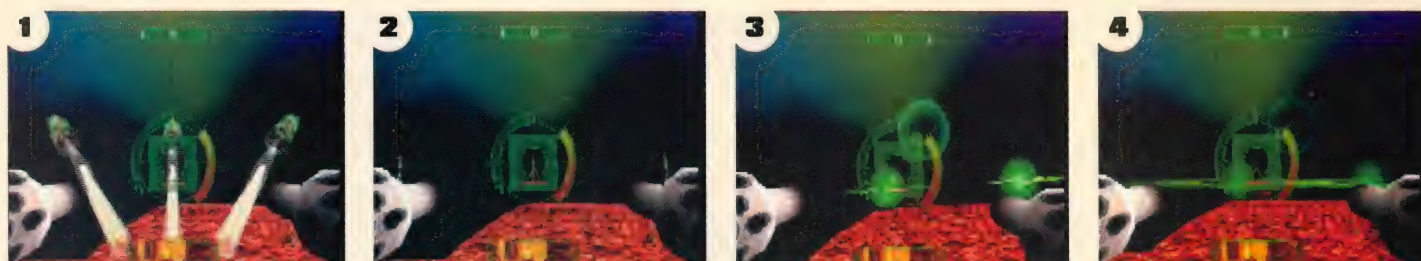
way. Of course you are still being harassed from all sides by more monster, making this even more tricky than the first. The third stage is more of the same, and then you face the boss stage. It is a good idea to have learned how to use the sidestep functions at this point.

BIGGER AND BETTER

The worlds get steadily trickier, and increase bigger and tougher monsters and more arduous tasks. The action is punctuated by FMV sequences which deal with the allegedly funny plot. They are the 3D rendered kind, and are best skipped past. The second world is a bit more bumpy than the first, and this "undulating landscape" makes traversing the play area almost like hard work. However, if you think about it, there is usually a simple way round (top tip: use the strafe buttons



BLAM! MACHINE-HEAD PROVIDES THE OPPORTUNITY TO USE LOTS OF COOL WEAPONS.



BLAM INDEED

Hooray for big guns – that's what I say. Bombs too. There are some cool weapons of mass destruction available, and they look nice as well. Just take a peek at some of these.



to climb up some steep hills that you can't climb without a big run up. The 3D engine is great, and the world is very convincing, with gravity and inertia working more or less as they should. Especially pleasingly, the enemies can also blow things up too, and it can be pretty scary to watch an abandoned car explode and then see some new horror hulking into view. One of the most effective levels has several lanes of motorway that must be traversed. The traffic on these roads is extremely dangerous, not to mention that there are missile launching gun turrets in between the lanes. Another level sees you up against enemy foot soldiers in a futuristic laboratory, which is quite reminiscent of *Quake* and its daddy, *Doom*. By the forth world, it's more like *Alien Trilogy*, with gigantic mutant spider monsters around every corner. Helpfully though, there are boxes full of extra ammo and health for you to grab. These are present on all the levels,

and unless you are some sort of games playing genius you will need every one of them.

HELPFUL HINTS

Core have been very nice and provided not only the option of backing up your game on a memory card but also have provided passwords which do the same job. This is brilliant, as the levels are very big indeed, and playing your way through the entire game will take hours, even on the easiest of the difficulty levels.

So far it sounds great, doesn't it? Well it is, funnily enough. There must be some problems with it though? Life wouldn't be any fun if we didn't have anything to moan about, would it? So: sometimes your bike is a little bit of a bitch to move about. You have about as much chance of getting up a steep hill as a Dalek. This is intentional, but it isn't half irritating sometimes. Secondly it's not the deepest game in the world – there isn't much room for philosophy, and the closest you get to puzzle solving is finding a key or activating a switch. But, if you just want a frantic blaster you'll certainly get your moneys worth here.

PRAM!

So its pretty damn great. A little deeper than *Tunnel B1*, and miles ahead of the risible



(ABOVE) THE TOP SET OF PICTURES SHOWS THE MOST POWERFUL WEAPON IN THE ENTIRE GAME. IT SHOOTS INTO THE AIR, DETONATES, AND RELEASES A STORM OF LETHAL ELECTRICITY. IT THEN EXPLODES SPECTACULARLY. THE SECOND ROW SHOWS A MUCH-LESS-POWERFUL-BUT-ALMOST-AS-PRETTY TRIPLE BOMB THING BEING DEVASTATING.

Opinion Did I think it was going to be any good? No. Did it blow be away by being top? Indeed. If this game had a two player link-up it would be completely groovy. However, it's one player, and it's still top. If you don't have a friend to link-up with then this is the one for you. TC

Krazy Ivan, this is probably the best PlayStation blaster yet. You may want to consider *Magic Carpet* or *Fade To Black* as alternatives, but really this is easily the best game of its style. It may not last you forever, but it will certainly give you a challenge if you reckon you're a bit good at this sort of thing.

Tired of *Doom* clones? This

will sort you out – it's nice to see a different approach being taken for once, and the bizarre story line only goes to work in the game's favour thanks to the addition of oddball creatures which could only exist in the world Core's scenario creates. A well-taken risk by the Derby-based team which has paid off handsomely.

PSP RATING...

Graphics : 91
Animation : 87
Sound FX : 82
Music : 78
Lastability : 69
Playability : 79

89



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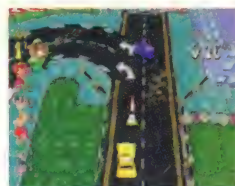
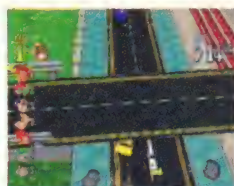
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Supersonic Racers



ackey Races. Now that was a cartoon. Not perhaps a fantastically good cartoon, but it has inspired no end of comedy racing games with zany characters, (and launched the careers of Dick Dastardly and Muttley), so it's all right by me. The best one on the PlayStation at the moment has got to be *Motor Toon Grand Prix 2*, what with its fast action, spectacular courses, and mind-bending graphics. *Supersonic Racers* is different though. While *Motor Toon Grand Prix 2* was clearly inspired by *Ridge Racer*, *Supersonic Racers* looks absolutely nothing like it, or any other PlayStation game. However, it *does* look like *Micro Machines*. A lot like *Micro Machines*. It plays like *Micro Machines*, too. In fact I

would go so far as to say that *Supersonic Racers* is *Micro Machines*, or at the very least they were separated at birth. This is understandable, as the people who wrote it used to work for Codemasters – and it is worth noting that Codemasters themselves are soon to bring out the fantastic looking 3D *Micro Machines V3*. Can the courageous splinter group beat their old masters at their own game, or will they cock it up and all shout at the person who suggested they all leave in the first place?

WONDERWALL RACERS

If you aren't familiar with *Micro Machines*, then you are probably thinking "looks-o-blinking lordy. I've got no



idea what this idiot is on about. What *is* *Micro Machines* anyway?"

Micro Machines – the game – is based on *Micro Machines* – the toys. The toys are tiny little models of cars and things. They are about the size of a large humbug. The video game involves racing the diminutive vehicles around various household locations such as the kitchen table, the bathtub, a desk and a sandpit. There are different vehicles

to suit each location, for example you get a speed boat for the bath, a dune buggy for the sandpit, and a sports car for the desk (for some reason). It was fantastic in two player mode, but was not so hot on your own.

In *Supersonic Racers*, the cars are full sized, and thankfully the locations are too. Otherwise it would be ridiculous. As in *Micro Machines* there are several comedy characters to choose from too. In *Micro Machines*, how-

FOR SOME REASON THIS WATERY BIT IS REMINISCENT OF MARIO KART.



Release : SEPTEMBER
Company : MINDSCAPE
Price : £44.95
Players : 1 - 2
Genre : RACING





ever, the character you picked didn't make any difference to the gameplay. Here each character has a different stylised vehicle, and therefore their attributes vary substantially.

ROLL WITH IT RACERS

Whereas *Micro Machines* was viewed from above, *Supersonic Racers* is viewed from above and behind, like the outside views in *Formula 1*. The camera does move about to give you a better view of the course, though, and there is an option to change it to a view that revolves around depending where you are on the course. In the two player game the camera is normally in this mode, and as the cars get further apart the camera pans out so that you can see both players properly. The graphics are simplistic and cartoony, and everything moves very nicely. The physics work well too: when



the cars bump each other, they behave exactly as you would expect them to. If you bash a rival's car from behind you don't stop dead, you both bounce off and continue on your way. This can be very useful on the courses with obstacles of perilous drops, as you can bash your enemies into them. This is especially good fun in two player mode. Unless you are the one falling to your high-speed-impact-with-the-ground doom, of course.

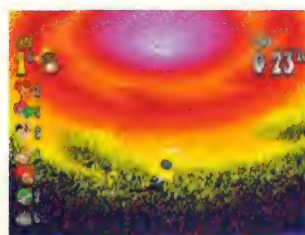
In fact in two player mode, pretty much everything is great. As long as you aren't racing on one of the really dreadful courses (of which

PENGUIN SLIDE. YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN...

This level is brill. You start at the bottom of a spiral track. You use this lift to climb up to the top, then you slide all the way down. Especially fun in two player mode.



1. THE CARS APPROACH THE SKI LIFT, NOT KNOWING QUITE WHAT TO EXPECT.
2. THEY WAIT PATIENTLY FOR THE NEXT RIDE.
3. AS THE LIFT APPROACHES THE CARS FIGHT TO SEE WHO WILL GET A PLACE.
4. ONLY A FEW OF THE CARS MANAGE TO GET ON THE LIFT, AND IT TAKES THEM AWAY.
5. THE LIFT IS SO CROWDED THAT ONE UNLUCKY CAR DROPS OFF.
6. THE REMAINING CARS ARE HOPING NOT TO FALL TO THE SAME FATE.
- 7&8. BY THE END ONLY TWO SURVIVE.



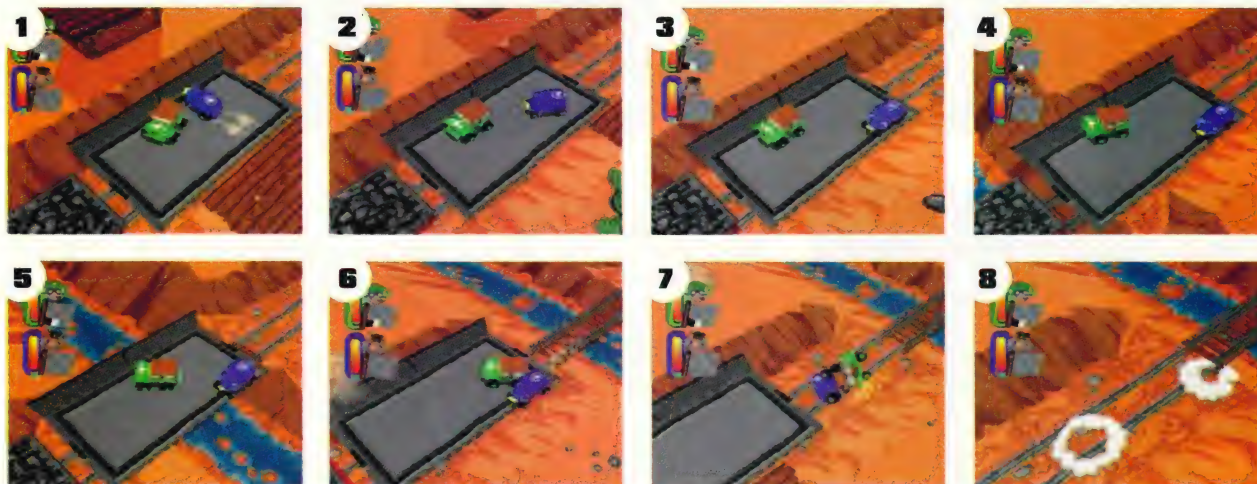
I'M NOT TOO KEEN ON THE SPACE LEVELS. THE MULTI-COLOURED BLACK HOLE IS QUITE NICE THOUGH, IF A BIT ODD TO SAY THE LEAST.

there are a few) you are pretty much guaranteed top gaming laughs and excitement. There are loads of different modes to play, and they are all good. In the one player game there are still loads of modes, but it just isn't as much fun. This is probably due to the fact that, firstly, you don't have someone who you can bash about and who drives like a real person (because they are) and, secondly, because you can shout at them and bash them some more. And then insult them. In the one player mode you are up against seven other racers who just race round, like computer controlled cars in a racing game.

ACQUIESCE RACERS

So where does this leave *Supersonic Racers*? Should you wait and see what *Micro Machines V3* is like, or even splash out on the top *Motor Toon Grand Prix 2*. *Motor Toon Grand Prix 2* is absolutely top in one player mode (important, as you need a two PlayStation link-up to play), and *Micro Machines V3* should have a much improved one player game, as well as great 2-4 player action (all on one PlayStation) as well. The two player game in *Supersonic Racers* is a great laugh, but competitive multi-player games usually are. There are some top little touches, and

G'MON AND RIDE IT (THE TRAIN)



THIS TRAIN RIDE IS A BIT LIKE THE SKI LIFT. THIS IS THE TWO-PLAYER BATTLE MODE. FIRST OF ALL, THE PLAYERS CO-OPERATE AND KEEP THEIR DISTANCE. HOWEVER THEY SOON START JOSTLING AND ATTEMPTING TO PUSH THE OTHER OFF, AND END UP DEAD.

it's very slick, but it certainly isn't ground breaking. There is nothing here that won't be superseded by *Micro Machines V3*, and I would really recommend everyone waits to see how good it is. However, if you really want to play a *Micro Machines*-style racer today, this is the only choice. If you want a "wacky racer" to play today, get *Motor Toon Grand Prix 2*. If your cash supply is limited and multiplayer antics are on your shopping list, wait for *Micro Machines V3*.

COLUMBIA RACERS

So, what exactly can recommend *Supersonic Racers*? Firstly there's the one player games. In Grand Prix mode you race all seven opponents on a predetermined selection of tracks, with points awarded for coming in high positions. If you don't come in

WACKY RACERS

The gang's all here – and what a kerazy bunch they are. From the one copied off of Gargamel off *The Smurfs* to the stereotypical large breasted lady. Oh my aching, aching sides...



the top three, you have to complete a lap of the track in under a certain time or you are disqualified. In World Series, you race a number of single lap races, and are again awarded points according to how high you place. No matter in what position you come, you automatically qualify for the next race. Championship mode pits you against individual opponents in a knockout competition. Rather oddly all the other drivers are still on the track, except they are now rubbish, and it doesn't matter in what place they finish. In Knockout mode all the characters race at once, but after each race the character who came last is disqualified, until only one of them is left.

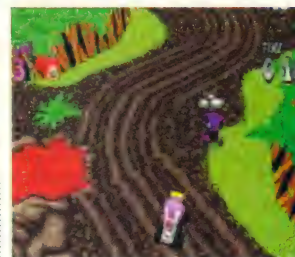
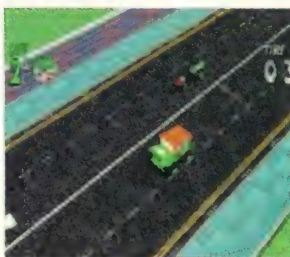
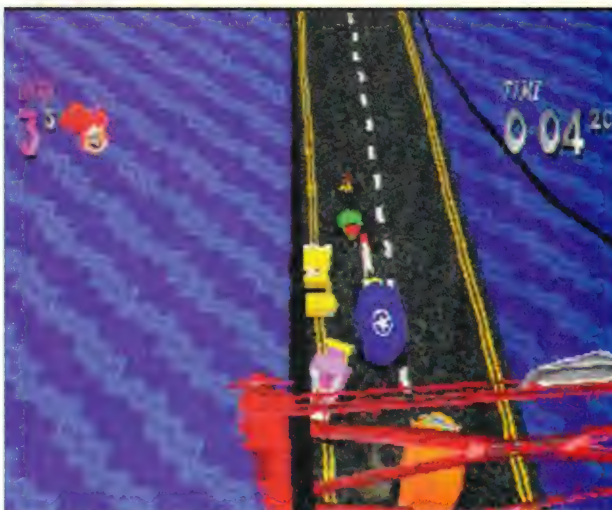
There are a fair number of two player modes too, but the best by far is battle mode. It's just the two of you



and here the race is not decide on who finishes first, but on who can make the other player explode the most number of times. You do this by getting a certain amount of lead between you and the other car. After a certain distance the other car begins to lose energy. When it's energy runs out it explodes. This is where the pushing and shoving really comes into effect.

There are some irritations, though. Some corners aren't

Opinion Okay. It's little more than *Micro Machines*. In 3D. But different. If you desperately need a two player comedy racer then by all means buy it – but don't start crying if *Micro Machines V3* turns out to be twice as good. *Supersonic Racers* is possibly good for small children, though. As long as they are really good at computer games. **TC**



as clearly marked as they should be, and this is especially infuriating in the two player mode, where the lead car doesn't have a very good view of the up and coming track. Sometimes the road splits, and the arrows that tell you which way to go are useless, as they point down both tracks. This is really awful, as if you go down the wrong one you explode, costing you valuable seconds.

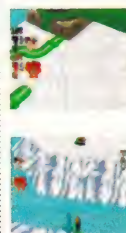
By now you should be aware of whether you should

buy it or not. You don't probably, but if you see it for a tenner or get given it for a present, then buy it and don't whine respectively. *Supersonic Racers*? Not-very-good-in-one-player-mode-sonic Racers, more like.

PSP RATING...

Graphics : 80
Animation : 80
Sound FX : 65
Music : 60
Lastability : 67
Playability : 82

74



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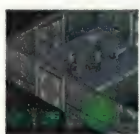
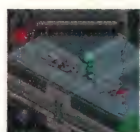
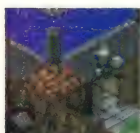
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THE CHARACTERS IN PROJECT OVERKILL MOVE AROUND THE ISOMETRIC LEVELS EASILY, WITH WALLS BECOMING TRANSPARENT AS YOU APPROACH, SO ENABLING PICK-UPS AND THE LIKE.



Project Overkill



Well, as you may already have guessed from the none-too-subtle title,

Project Overkill is another high body count shoot 'em up. What distinguishes it from the hundreds of other similarly themed games is the emphasis on the grimly realistic death sequences. Just look around the page and examine the screen shots. Pile after pile of recently murdered corpses abound, often missing limbs, heads, and usually a fair amount of blood. However, *Doom* has already gone some way towards satisfying the bloodlust of the world's gamers – can *Project Overkill* provide a filling second course, or is it a hastily prepared instant noodle snack to be eaten before you rush off to the pub?

The premise behind all this mindless violence is that you are the head of a crack bunch of mercenaries (yawn...) who must decimate a load of planets so that Earth can take them over. This is done by

down to personal preference which one you choose. Be warned though; their energy and ammo levels are not topped up after each level. Also when they die, they stay dead. There's none of that reincarnation malarkey here.

NOT IN THE FACE!

When you start a level, the first thing you do, of course, is wander up to one of the identical guards and shoot them. This is tremendously satisfying as they all die in a graphic and bloody way (the aliens you are attempting to destroy are called the Viscerans, appropriately enough). There are loads of different death sequences, and blood splatters onto the walls and floor gruesomely. The dead bodies of the fallen remain crumpled on the ground as testament to your amoral massacring. Cool.

There are four different categories of weapon that each uses a different form of ammunition, and every character has a weapon of each variety, but they all differ slightly. For example, where one character has mines, another may have a rocket launcher. This doesn't make an awful lot of difference to which character you choose, as you really have to go for the one with the most ammo and health. There are extra top-ups throughout the levels, but these are scant, and progress is tough. Luckily you can save your game after each mission with a memory card – phew.

I'VE BROKEN A NAIL

Each mission has a simple objective, for example poisoning a water supply or just killing everyone. For the most part this involves pegging around the place shoot-

ing indiscriminately. There are different meannies, but for the most part you are fighting the same sort of monsters. It does look very similar for most of the time, and if you are easily bored then you may not persevere for very long. This would be a mistake, however, as to get your money's worth you really have to delve deeper. Unfortunately, it doesn't actually go *that* deep. It's

sort of an unthinking mans' *Crusader: No Remorse*. The control system is a lot simpler (good), but it never really feels intuitive enough (bad). You use the Dpad to move your bloke or lady around, and use the four other main pad buttons to choose which direction you want to shoot in (just like *Smash TV* on the SNES). Sadly it doesn't work quite like you'd imagine. You can't walk in one direction



Release : OCTOBER '96
Company : KONAMI
Price : £44.95
Players : 1
Genre : SHOOT 'EM UP



HERE YOU CAN SEE A VERY DEAD HEADLESS MONSTER. MY CHARACTER IS TRAILING THE BLOOD FROM HIS SQUIDGY CORPSE ALL OVER THE SHOP. THAT ORANGEY STUFF IS LAVA. IT HURTS YOU.



THIS IS THE MISSION SELECTING BIT. AS YOU CAN SEE FROM THE LUMINOUS WINDOW IN THE BOTTOM LEFT, THERE ARE MANY ROUTES YOU CAN CHOOSE.



NOW ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS SELECT YOUR CHARACTER AND YOU'RE AWAY. OR YOU COULD LOAD A DIFFERENT GAME. OR SAVE YOUR CURRENT ONE.

Opinion I really enjoyed this when I first started playing it, but as time wore on I became tired of the endless slaughter. A bit like Wilfred Owen. If you've got a hole in your pocket and you like the look of it you may as well give it a go, but you really have seen better before. TC

while shooting in another, and one would really have thought that being to do that sort of thing would be why the control system is the way it is. Hmmm.

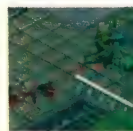
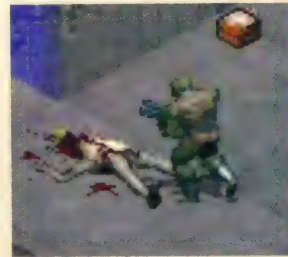
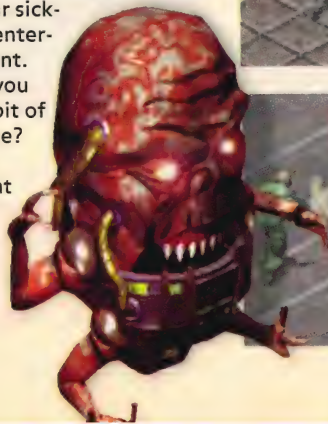
You end up just standing in one place mowing down everyone you can, then shuffling towards the ones you can't, firing all the time. You end up looking like some sort

of dense robot rather than a secret agent-style agile bloke. Terminator rather than Lethal Weapon, if you like. Come to think of it, occasionally you're Scooby Doo.

When you're running away in the game, that is. Sometimes you'll come up against some big evil monsters who you just have to run away from to avoid getting mashed. As you

YOU BRING OUT THE ORGANS IN ME

The copious amount of death in *Project Overkill* really is extraordinary. Here we pay tribute to the thousands of baddies who die in an over the top manner to please you. They die horribly for your sickening entertainment. Don't you feel a bit of remorse? Nope, thought not.



IT'S ONLY THEIR JOB

Here are the protagonists. They are probably normal, pleasant and helpful people like you and me, who at one important moment in their lives chose a path of violence and hate rather than peace and love.



This is the token girl one, who has to wear pink and everything. Her guns aren't that fantastic either. She probably makes up for it by running very fast.



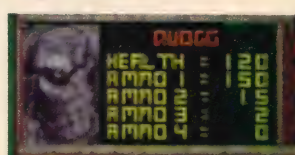
Now this bloke is a hairy mutant monster thing. He looks a bit like Blanka. He's a master of stealth, apparently. And he's an assassin.



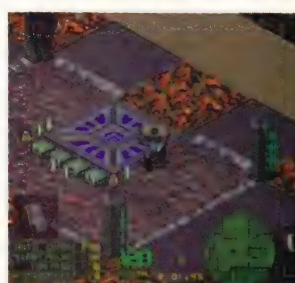
Here's the dull as dish-water normal human bloke. He is bald though, so you can pretend you're one off Right Said Fred on a mission of destruction.



This rather chunky alien bloke looks like the orange one out of The Fantastic Four. Except he's green. And he's not called "Thing". Thankfully.



LEFT ARE THE FAILURE AND SUCCESS SCREENS. THESE TELL YOU WHETHER YOU SUCCEEDED OR FAILED, FUNNILY ENOUGH. THEY ALSO TELL YOU HOW MANY PEOPLE DIED DUE TO YOUR VIOLENT ACTIONS.



can't shoot backwards it degenerates into some sub-Benny Hill chase sequence, with the agitated young women replaced by giant killer lizards. Without the comedy music.

YOU'VE HIT MY BOG

As I mentioned previously, it's hard. You really have to watch out how much ammo you use up. Killed enemy guards don't always leave ammo, and robots and monsters don't leave you with anything apart from a stain on the carpet. The bonuses placed around the level are distributed very fairly, just where and when you need them. Perseverance really is

required if you want to see the later levels, and you may have to attempt certain levels a few times to get past them. If you get stuck on one particular level, there is always the choice of playing a different one instead.

The levels take quite a while to complete, and even once you are familiar with the layout by having played it through already, it takes literally time to battle your way through to your objective. This does mean that you get value for money as far as plenty of death is concerned – the body count on some levels can run into hundreds. Background objects explode too, and anyone standing by

them (including you) stands a chance of being injured or killed in the blast. And it looks good too.

The isometric display causes irritation too. As veteran *Syndicate Wars* players will know, it's pretty infuriating when an enemy bursts unannounced from behind a wall, and even though your character should clearly be able to see him, you can't. This happens here too, but it is slightly made up for by the fact that when you move next to a wall it goes transparent enabling you to see your character properly. It is still annoying though.

I'VE GOT A STITCH

The trouble with this game is that even though it's fun to play, it's big, it's violent, and it's hard, it's not particularly clever. There is nothing that screams "I'm great, me! You really have got to buy me you know. Your friends will laugh at you heartily if you don't. I'm cool." To be honest it looks like a Megadrive game. And even though *The Truth About Cats And Dogs* has taught us that looks are important, unlike Jennine Garofalo, it slows down when there are loads of baddies on the screen at once. The over-

all effect it that it's nothing special. This is backed up by the simplistic gameplay. With the likes of *Syndicate Wars* and *Reloaded* out soon you'd be a fool to blow all your cash on this. Having said that, it is lots of fun, but I really wouldn't recommend anyone but the richest gamer purchase it. A shame – when I started playing it I thought it was going to be absolutely fantastic. *Crusader: No Remorse* may provide a deeper alternative, so if you like the sound of this, keep your eyes peeled for that.



PSP Rating...
Graphics : 79
Animation : 83
Sound FX : 82
Music : 61
Lastability : 78
Playability : 71

79

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THE ART OF ADAPTION



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THE GAME BEGINS WITH A COIN TOSS, BEFORE THE DEFENSIVE TEAM KICKS OFF. THE POWER BAR AND DIRECTION METER DETERMINE THE DIRECTION AND LENGTH OF THE KICK.



Madden NFL '97



he evolutionary process slowly yawns into action as time slowly drifts past. From a matter of minutes to entire centuries, the world is in constant change, as animals adapt to suit their surroundings and frail seedlings to blossom into vibrant floral bouquets. Evolution spreads further afield than Mother Nature too, with technology constantly updating itself thus improving pretty much everything from movie special effects to NASA's progress through space. Over the past fifteen years the games console has dramatically evolved, from the archaic Atari VCS through to the Sony PlayStation. However, effects of time aren't always so drastic. Tory morals have barely changed in the past century for example, and Dave Lee Travis still has the same haircut from 1975!

Like Croft and Perry comedies, *Madden NFL Football* has barely evolved either. *Madden NFL '97*, the latest in Electronic Arts' acclaimed American football series, is

NO AMOUNT OF RAIN WILL STOP A GAME OF AMERICAN FOOTBALL.



structurally almost identical to the original *Madden* which blitzed the MegaDrive in 1992. This is no bad thing though – the first was a landmark game and *Madden* has made the transition from 16bit to 32bit unscarred.

There are obvious changes though, as a five-year-old game would look ridiculously archaic on Sony's next generation console. The most obvious difference is the television-style presentation, a dramatic change of visual style that takes advantage of the machine's superior processing power. Team statistics and play rosters have also been updated, thus making this the most comprehensive American football game to date.

But underneath the motion-captured animation and realistic graphics there's an all-too-familiar game skeleton. Like the previous *Madden* games

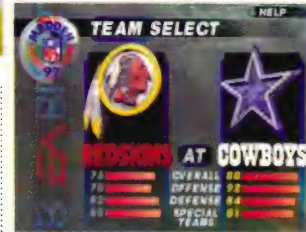
WITH A HUNDRED TEAMS TO CHOOSE FROM, MADDEN NFL '97 SURE IS COMPREHENSIVE.

and even the more recent *NFL GameDay*, *Madden NFL '97* offers the the usual exhibition and tournament modes but, like pretty much every else in the game, takes them to the next level. There's a hundred teams to choose from rather than the usual handful, featuring current player rosters and also 'classic teams' from past Superbowls, so fans of the Washington Redskins can play the '93 line-up using this year's roster. Yeah it's anal, but some prefer the broad shoulders of a Yankee quarterback to the fulsome bosom of a blonde beauty. Weird, I know, but one

man's, erm, meat is another man's poison.

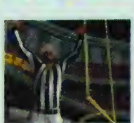
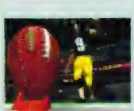
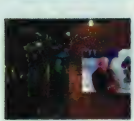
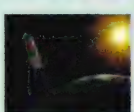
PLAYING A FRIENDLY

Of the three game modes available, exhibition is the quickest and easiest to play. It's a straightforward one-off match between any

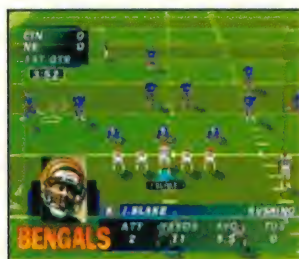


two of the teams on offer, introducing the player to the rules of the sport and also allowing them to get to grips with the control system. It's surprisingly simple although a basic knowledge of the game is incredibly useful. Having waded through countless menus that toggle through various weather conditions and change the length of each quarter, players toss for kick-off before moving onto the play selection screen. Virtually every football move imaginable is included, from throwing the ball, running through the scrimmage line, to kicking a field goal. The run of play is clearly presented on each icon, highlighting the position of quarterback and wide receivers, or running backs if a running play is chosen. Likewise, the defensive side chooses a counterattack, opting to either blitz the scrimmage line for rushing

24... HUT!



Release : SEPTEMBER
Company : EA
Price : £44.99
Players : 1-2
Genre : SPORTS



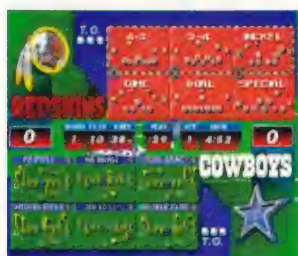
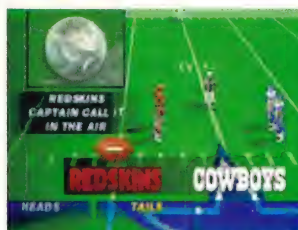
plays or positioning linebackers further upfield if the opposition attempts a throw.

KICKING OFF

Moving onto the field, the offensive player assumes controls of the quarterback while the defence takes control of a single linesman. The clock starts ticking the moment the ball is hiked back to the quarterback, who can then choose to run or throw the ball. Rushing is perfect for gaining small yardage while the bigger plays almost always come from throwing the ball. It's therefore more difficult, as the quarterback must avoid the rush of charging players while attempting to throw the ball. As the ball flies through the air control is automatically switched to the wide receivers, who must be position to catch the ball. This is difficult at the best of times, as defensive players swarm across the field in the hope of intercepting a throw.

Interceptions aren't the only rules to be implemented in *Madden NFL '97* either. During the course of each match a variety of personal fouls are often committed, from holding to the pulling of helmet faceplates. There are also touchbacks, audibles, injuries, safeties, sacks... Every aspect of the sport is included in *Madden NFL '97*, making for one of the most realistic American football

CA BLACK. THE MORPHS ARE MORE DETAILED AND ARE MORE BRIGHTLY COLOURED TOO.



simulations ever.

This is enhanced further by the presentation. From the opening sequence to the various angles, *Madden NFL '97* is presented in much the same way as a television programme. Before and during the football season commentators enthuse over the

Opinion Combining slick visual style with immediate gameplay, *Madden NFL '97* continues the Electronic Arts tradition of producing top-quality sports simulations. More comprehensive and in-depth than Sony's own *NFL GameDay*, this is the cream of PlayStation American football games. Brilliant.

AS

league ratings while the motion-captured animation gives the game that extra bit of authenticity. In-game sound effects and music is used well too, the obligatory grunts and groans of the mauling players accompanied by the referee's monotone drawl bouncing around the stadium's PA system.

THE SEASON BEGINS

Back to the game itself. In addition to the exhibition mode there are also tournament and season options. The former enter a tournament for either eight or 16 teams, each side fighting for a place in the quarter finals before moving onto further through the field. The season, however, is much more complex. It tackles the managerial aspect of American football as well as the grid-iron clashes on the turf, following the weekly progress of the thirty NFL teams. Players can control any of the matches or simply leave the computer to determine the results, which are then collated before the next weekly schedule kicks off. Throughout the season, injuries must be replaced via substitution, while players can be traded, sold off or bought. Add to this the reams of player and team statistics and the result is an extremely comprehensive American football game.

IS IT ANY GOOD?

Yes. Following in the footsteps of the previous *Madden* games, *Madden NFL '97* is visually sophisticated, extremely realistic and immensely playable. It's uses the same control system as the earlier *Madden* games too, and is therefore relatively simple to pick up. A basic knowledge of the sport and the terminology does makes

THE VIRTUAL STADIUM



MADDEN NFL '97 INCORPORATES THE SAME VIRTUAL STADIUM TECHNOLOGY THAT FEATURED IN FIFA SOCCER. THIS GIVES THE GRAPHICS A TRUE THREE-DIMENSIONAL FEEL AND ALSO ALLOWS FOR A LOAD OF DIFFERENT CAMERA ANGLES, OF WHICH THERE ARE EIGHT. VARYING FROM THE CLASSIC MADDEN CAM TO SIDELINE AND DIAGONAL VIEWS, MADDEN NFL '97 HAS ALL THE SPARKLING PRESENTATION OF AN AMERICAN TELEVISION SHOW.

it easier to play, otherwise some of the moves can become confusing. However, because *Madden NFL '97* is so enjoyable and relatively accessible, it will even appeal to players who aren't avid followers of America's second biggest sport.

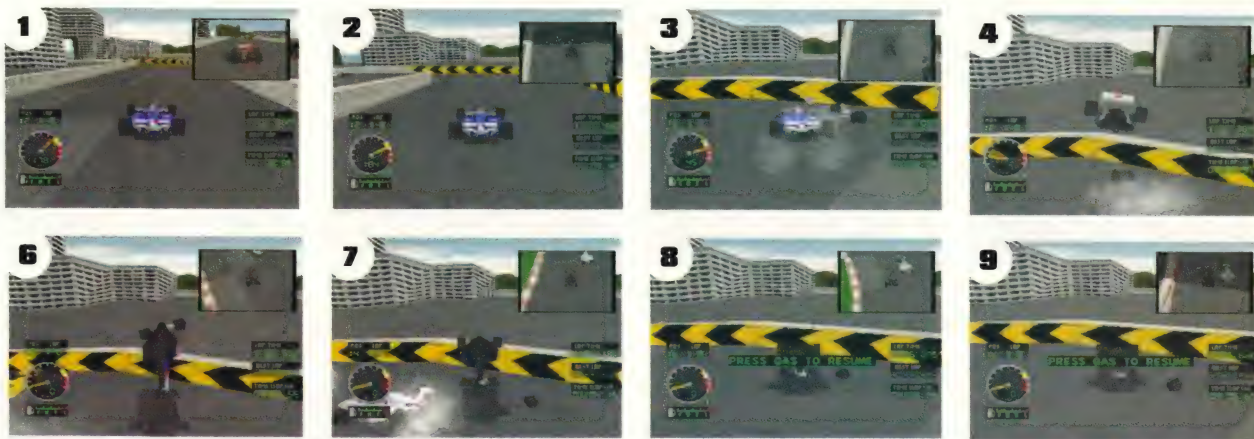
PSP RATING...

Graphics : 87
Animation : 83
Sound FX : 84
Music : 85
Lastability : 87
Playability : 88

86

HALFTIME REPORT		
SCORE	7	0
TOTAL OFF	87	103
OFF. PASSING	36	43
OFF. RUSHING	51	60
TURNOVERS	0	0
THIRD DOWNS	3	5
THIRD DWS. CONV.	1	0
THIRD DOWN PCT.	33	0

1. RIGHT. HERE WE GO NOW. I'M GOING TO GO AROUND THIS CORNER ON THE PERFECT RACING LINE AND NO MISTAKE.
2. YUP, YOU'RE NOT GOING TO GET ME CRASHING INTO THE WALL FOR NO REASON OTHER THAN IT LOOKS COOL.
3. OH, ALL RIGHT THEN
4. BANG! UP INTO THE AIR I GO.
5. AT THIS POINT I GET TO LOOK STRAIGHT AT THE GROUND.
6. AT THIS POINT MY CAR NOSE IS TOUCHING THE GROUND.
7. CLUMP. I TOPPLE OVER.
8. MY WHEEL FLIES OFF.
9. I JUST SIT THERE. IMPASSE.
10. SUDDENLY I AM GIVEN A NEW, ENTIRELY UNDamaged, CAR. NOT BAD, EH?



Andretti Racing



he Andrettis are the first family of motor sport. Michael, Jeff and Mario are three top driving blokes in the US, and this game celebrates their multiple racing achievements. Rather than go for a full-on arcade *Ridge Racer* jobbie, EA have gone for a much more simulation oriented game. However, this puts into direct competition with Psygnosis' *Formula 1*, which scored a whopping 93% in *PlayStation Plus Issue 11* – can it hope to out run it, or does it crash on the first bend and sit out the whole race in the pits, moaning about how it could have been a contender?



Andretti Racing has a trick up its sleeve: you can choose to race both formula one and stock cars. Both cars have different characteristics, and this adds a whole extra level of depth to the gameplay, which is already quite a few fathoms deep, due to the 'career' mode, in which you do loads of races in a row to simulate the impressive careers of the Andrettis (you can save your progress to memory card if you have one). Alternatively you can just have a single exhibition race, link PlayStations with a friend and play head to head, or even visit the Andretti school of motoring. Yes, the Andretti's are here to personally tell you how to drive their way.

COMPARISONS

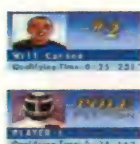
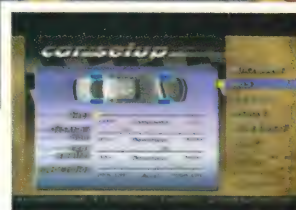
Rather than just choosing manual or automatic gears as in *Ridge Racer* you are given more or less complete control over your vehicle. Different strength tyres can be selected, the angle of the

THE ANDRETTIS ARE ONE OF AMERICA'S TOP RACING FAMILIES, WITH MARIO THE MOST FAMOUS.

front and back wings can be altered, and even the gear ratios can be changed – fantastic! Or fantastically dull. You decide. Don't worry if this sort of thing doesn't appeal to you, as thankfully you can do just fine without changing a single thing about your car.

The actual driving bit is in

the now familiar 3D polygon style and looks a bit like a less flashy version of *Formula 1*. There are three different driving views selectable with the joypad, and there is also another camera available which displays either the race leader, your rear view, or your car from another angle in the corner of the screen.



Release : NOVEMBER '96
Company : EA
Price : £44.95
Players : 1-2
Genre : RACING

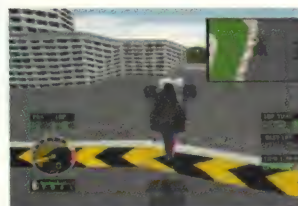


Alternatively you can have a very handy map of the track – this is especially hand in this game as you really have to make allowances for corners.

SPONSORSHIP

The cars are a bit squashed looking and all of them are sponsored. I always seem to get the extremely naff looking QVC one. This is made up for by the top instant replay feature option (accessible at any point during the game), and the spectacular crashes. Your car actually flips right over at very high speed, and your opponents get piled up all around you. They look good with an outside view of the car, but if you are using the inside view they are incredible – and using the replay feature you can enjoy them over and over again.

After you have practised the track enough, you can choose to qualify for a starting position (advisable, as if you don't you automatically start 16th and last), or go straight for the race. The cars handle very nicely, and car to car collisions are handled fairly, and you can really mess up your opponents' chances by colliding with them. Eventually you start to achieve decent finishing positions, and by this time



CRASHES CAN BE VIEWED FROM ANY ANGLE DUE TO THE EXCELLENT INSTANT REPLAY OPTION

you are ready for the career mode. At this point a memory card is strongly advisable unless it's an extremely rainy day outside.

ANGLES

There aren't many complaints with *Andretti Racing*. The other camera picture can

obscure your view of the track unless you turn it off, and if you start going into the pit by accident then you have to stop at your crew for a crucial split second.

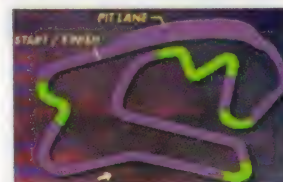
What we have here is a highly competent but not overly flash game that makes a great companion to both *Formula 1* and *Ridge Racer*, and is entertaining in its own right. It basically boils down to a question of preference. If you want a dedicated formula one simulation go for *Formula 1*, if you want a purely arcade-ish thing then *Ridge Race Revolution* is the one for you. However, if you fancy something squeezed tightly between the two then *Andretti Racing* is certainly worth considering. It's also worth remembering that this is the only proper stock car simulation on the Play-Station – the closest thing is the smash 'em up *Destruction Derby*, which is a great game if you want to bash cars around as much as race them, but it's nowhere near as accurate a simulation as this.

TRACKS OF MY TEARS

There are 16 tracks in *Andretti Racing*, and here they are, from the ludicrously dull Thunderdrome to the top Vallejo. They are all played through in career mode, and you can pick which one to practice or race on in exhibition race mode.



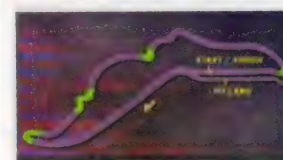
BRIDGEPORT



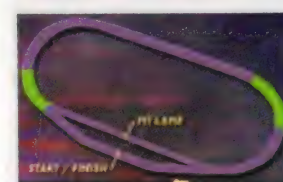
CINCINNATI



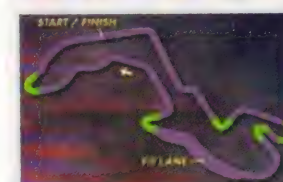
MEISAKA



PACIFIC



THUNDERDROME



VALLEJO

Opinion Pleasant to drive with long term interest catered for by the career mode. However, you may want to consider the excellent *Ridge Racer Revolution* or *Formula 1*. If you don't want either of these then *Andretti Racing* should fill your slot perfectly.

TC



THIS IS MORE LIKE IT. THEY'RE OFF...AND QUICKLY I SWERVE PAST THE SLOWCOACHES. IF I HAD BOTHERED QUALIFYING I WOULD EASILY BE FIRST BY NOW. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT IS THAT WE CRASH. VERY BADLY.



PSP RACING...

Graphics : 75

Animation : 84

Sound FX : 73

Music : 62

Lastability : 86

Playability : 91

85

Davis



he tennis season has started belatedly for the PlayStation, with Codemasters'

Sampras Extreme missing its July release date by several weeks with a confirmed September debut, and Telstar's *Davis Cup Tennis* quite happy to stroll on to the Sony court at roughly the same time. Both players are keen to stress their individual attributes, with Sampras walking the well-trodden motion-capture route, while Telstar's game has opted for digitised sprites.

The *Davis Cup Tennis* tournament is one of the most prestigious tennis has to offer, on a par with Wimbledon at least. Its origins date back to the turn of the century when a leading player of the time — Dwight Filey Davis — donated a trophy to a tournament he was organising. Davis envisioned a lawn tennis tournament which would traverse the globe and, from a faltering start with only Britain and the US participating, the tournament has evolved beyond all recognition. 115 nations are represented, which are whittled down to sixteen entrants to main the matches where the big money prizes await. Telstar's game offers the player control over one of 48 would-be champions, each of whom represents the sixteen countries which have made it through to the tournament.

All the usual tennis game features are included for the £45 admission, with a world tour including Sweden, the US, and Italy, all of which promise different court surfaces and playing styles. Similarly, if the arduous *Davis Cup Tennis* tournament proves too daunting, Telstar have also included a 'Winner Stays On' championship, and a variety of leagues and secondary tournaments.

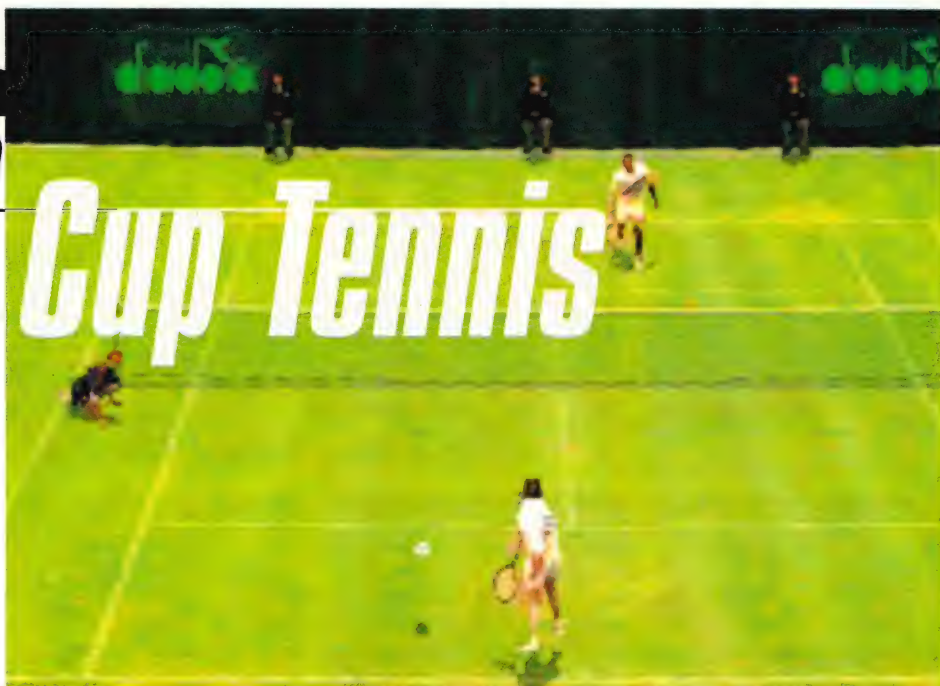
Release : SEPTEMBER '96

Company : TELSTAR

Price : £44.95

Players : 1-4

Genre : SPORT SIM



YOU ARE GIVEN THE CHOICE OF OUTDOOR CLAY OR GRASS COURTS, AS WELL AS INDOOR WOODEN COURTS.



FACE VALUE

To be honest, *Davis Cup Tennis* doesn't get off to a great start. On loading the game and selecting a tournament from the many options on offer, the player is then



invited to select a player from the 48 digitised faces on offer. Each of the faces has been copied from someone working at Telstar, and on highlighting a face, stats regarding their speed, agility and shot speed and strength are detailed — and the chosen player then mugs at the camera in true home movie fashion. Cringe. The use of digitised sprites is predominant throughout the game, with Telstar opting for extremely detailed sprites instead of the more common motion-captured affairs which grace *Sampras Extreme Tennis* and Ocean's forthcoming *Break Point*. While the benefits of the digitised system are detailed sprites

which move fairly fluidly, the downside is that the action is only ever presented through the third-person view. This has the unfortunate side-effect of giving the game a decidedly 16bit look, which is further compounded by the lack of animation frames — the switch between moves just doesn't come across as well as *Sampras Extreme Tennis*, and the two step animation between a sprite standing before launching into a dive for the ball is unintentionally amusing.

SHOT IN THE DARK

As with virtually every other tennis game available for the PlayStation, *Davis Cup Tennis* uses the four face buttons to

SADLY, A LOT OF THE ACTION AND GRAPHICS MAKE DAVIS CUP TENNIS RESEMBLE A 16BIT GAME, RATHER THAN EXPLOITING THE CAPABILITIES OF THE PLAYSTATION.





DIFFERENT COURTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD ARE USED TO MIRROR THE REAL DAVIS CUP TENNIS TOURNAMENT.



THESE PLAYERS ALL BEAR BIZARRE SIMILARITIES TO MANY OF THE STAFF WORKING AT TELSTAR. QUESTION IS, CAN ANY OF THEM REALLY PLAY TENNIS?



EVERY PIECE OF GAME DETAIL YOU NEED AT THE END OF THE MATCH IS ON OFFER IN DAVIS CUP TENNIS.

initiate the available shot styles. The X button is the best all-rounder, while the ● and ■ buttons are used for lobs and hard shots respectively. All shots can be directed depending on how long the button is depressed before hitting the ball, while



USING THE L AND R BUTTONS CAN HAVE A DEVASTATING EFFECT ON YOUR OPPONENT AS THEY TRY TO MEET YOUR ACE.

L2 and R2 add sidespin. Similarly, L1 and R1 enhance the player's running and affects the direction of the shot — sending the opponent running way off screen as they try to turn it. The ▲ button is used for smash shots, but the lack of perspective given by the one view makes these a bit of a hit and miss affair, just one of several annoying niggles found during play. Take, for example, serving. As the other player wanders back to their receive position, it is possible for the player to pull off a serve before they are entirely ready, while the earlier rounds of the tournament throw up some of the stupidest competitors you're ever likely to see. The early rounds soon become routine as the CPU-controlled players prove unable to return the simplest of shots, and can also be fooled by serving into their corner, before hitting the ball across to the other. They fail to reach it virtually every time, adding the first tennis variant of the 'score every time from 45 degrees' problem which plagues most footie games.



Opinion For a game which is incredibly well catered for in terms of options, it's surprising to see how poor a simulation of tennis *Davis Cup Tennis* really is. With its odd sprites and limited viewpoint, *Davis Cup Tennis* is a dead ringer for any Megadrive tennis game you may care to recall, and the dated look is also inherent in the stilted gameplay. The CPU characters are incredibly dim, and react to the simplest shots with pathetic shots that belie their supposed pro status. With *Sampras Extreme Tennis* setting a new standard in tennis games, tat like *Davis Cup Tennis* is simply unforgivable. A game flawed in virtually every department, and one that looks as bad as it plays. **SM**



MUM-BAM

It's a pity *Davis Cup Tennis* has such fundamental flaws, as it really tries to please. Several court surfaces are on offer around the globe, and trivia fans can dissect their performances via the post-match data screen which offers a breakdown of the number of faults, aces, games won, etc. Similarly, owners of the Sony Multi-Tap can opt for a game of doubles. Solitary McEnroes can participate in a doubles match with three CPU players, although it has to be said that most players will end up returning every shot in order to prevent lost points at the (cack)hands of your so-called partner. *Davis Cup Tennis* also allows the user to master difficult shots on a practice court, save their position on a memory card, or tinker with the game's sound samples. But basically, what's the point of such icing if the cake is stale and tasteless?

COURT OUT

Each of the sixteen countries takes a turn to host a match, and the practice modes allow the player to select which part of the world they wish to visit. Now, stop me if you've heard this before, but needless to say the different surfaces affect the ball's movements in different ways, with the following countries hosting these surfaces

CLAY



Italy
USA
India
Hungary

HARD



Austria
Switzerland
Belgium
South Africa

INDOOR



Germany
Netherlands
Denmark
Russia

GRASS



Great Britain
Mexico
France
Sweden

PSP RATING...

Graphics : 61
Animation : 58
Sound FX : 63
Music : 48
Lastability : 43
Playability : 62

50

SURELY A CUTSCENE SHOULD INJECT EXCITEMENT? OBVIOUSLY NOT, AS *ONSIDE* OPENS WITH A GENTLE STROLL ALONG A CALM CITY STREET BEFORE HEADING UP TOWARDS THE STADIUM. YAWN.



Coinciding with the break in the footie season, things have gone rather quiet on the PlayStation soccer front. After *Olympic Soccer's* last-gasp clinching of the title, although plans of new kickarounds have been announced (UEFA, FIFA '97, Adidas 2), mid-break signings have been very few and far between. Now, however, comes a promising youngster first revealed in the first issue of *PlayStation Plus*. *Onside*, with its promises of all-round soccer action, has finally run on to the pitch. Clad in its Telstar colours, it is set to kick off sometime during October.

Whereas past soccer games have boasted motion-capture or digitised commentary by the likes of Motty and Barry Davies, Telstar have spotted a massive gap in the market and have added managerial aspects to *Onside*. So, in addition to steering one of the dozens of European sides to a glorious victory, the player is also invited to don a sheepskin coat and get down and dirty with all the financial matters which have added grey flecks to many a manager. All the wheeling and dealing of the transfer market, book balancing, and tinkering with entry prices also come under *Onside's* list of managerial duties, with an invisible board of directors quick to come down on managers offering a less than sterling service.

With *Championship Manager 2* and *Player Manager* performing so well across a number of floppy-based formats there is definitely a gap in the PlayStation market for a Ron Atkinson simulation, but as Ruud Gullit will be the first to tell you, being a player manager is a different kettle of fish entirely.

Release : OCTOBER '96
Company : TELSTAR
Price : £44.99
Players : 1-2
Genre : SPORT

Onside



TAKING SIDES

Onside opens with an impressive complement of options. Following the decision to opt for a basic kickaround or jump straight into the deep end of managing one of the 74 European sides on offer. Teams from Germany, England, France and Italy await the player's attention, and each side contains real players from the relevant leagues, with West Ham lining up against the likes of Lazio and FC Hamburg for the first time in their life! Developers Elite have gone into option overdrive and every

aspect of *Onside* can be altered in some way. If the leagues on offer don't meet with approval, European 'super' leagues can be pieced together using any of the teams on offer, while smaller details like kit design, the length of games, mini tournaments, and camera modes can all be tailored to individual perfection. The action matches run along similar lines, too, with one and two-player arcade-style games running alongside matches with a full complement of rules and up to four players participating via a Multi-tap.

A DAY IN THE LIFE

Everything a football manager could ever need is located on top of the Telstar desk, with the day-to-day running located to the left of the table, while bank and financial details are in the centre and matters relating to transfers and buying and selling to the right.

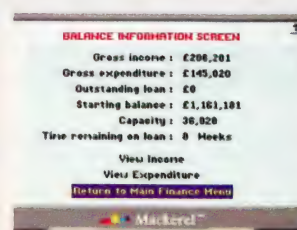
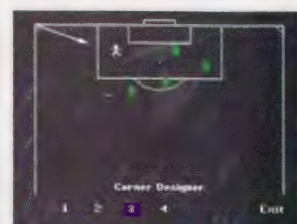
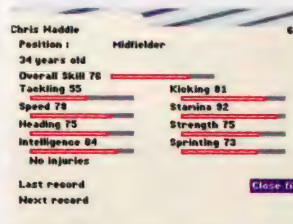
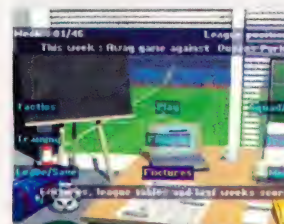
Every aspect of management has been reduced to a

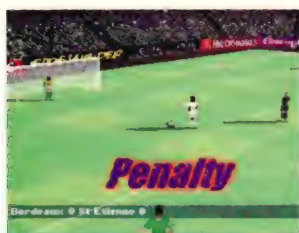
series of button presses, with set-pieces altered by dragging icons into the penalty area, and transfers limited to guessing which out of three price offers the team selling will accept — which is daft because if you understandably opt for the highest bid, there seems no real logic as to why the bid is rejected. Granted, if Aston Villa opt not to sell Gareth

BEHIND THE SCENES

Heading straight into the managerial side of things rewards the player with a big desk, upon which a number of options are overlaid. In *Onside*, the manager is responsible for everything apart from actually kicking a ball, and this includes the financial side and begging to the bank for a few extra million to buy Alan Shearer. Life as a manager starts as it means to go on, with the player borrowing money to get their onslaught on the

Southgate for the proffered £4 million, at least tell us that he went to Derby County for more. With the tactics in order and the team selected, the manager can then opt to watch, participate in, or just get the score of the next match — but if too many defeats follow, a few snotty letters from the all-powerful Board begin to flop onto your desk.





Premiership underway. Suitably in debt, a rigorous regime of training (including penalty taking and an indoor five-a-side game) follows, along with altering wage allocations, piecing together set-plays from free-kicks and corners, and dipping a toe into the transfer market. Everything is so easy to effect it seems hard to



VIEWS. EVERY GAME HAS THEM, BUT ONSIDE HAS GOT LOADS OF THE BLASTED THINGS. WATCH THE GAME FROM ABOVE, BELOW OR EVEN YOUR PLAYER'S SHORTS.



believe Alex Ferguson earns so much, with transfer negotiations a matter of pressing the X button a few times having picked how much to spend and on whom. The bid is then rejected or accepted, whereupon the player in question is automatically added to your line up. The season's fixtures are also detailed and before each game, as manager, the player is expected to finalise the formation and line-up, although glaring mistakes – such as playing Paul McGrath or putting a goalkeeper on the wing – are warned against by an invisible coach/assistant manager.

Sadly, for all the managerial options, Telstar have scored a massive own goal in that they have very little benefit in the arcade sequences. No matter how many top signings are picked or how much cash is spent, at the end of the day if you're crap at the footie sequences, you're up shit creek. Granted, the set-pieces run to order, but a disheartened team with the aforementioned goalkeeper up front can still beat champion-quality sides if the user is good enough. This major omission makes a majority of the managerial side more than a tad redundant, and offers no real incentive to any would-be shrewd wheeler-dealers.

PLAY IT SQUARE

The actual soccer sections initially resemble those of *Striker*, with Elite's default view seen from above and behind the nearest goal, with the sprites and ball control also resembling that of the Warner Interactive game. The four face buttons are used for shooting, passing and chipping, with headers automatically effected if one of



Opinion For a game that promised so much, *Onside* really is a disappointment. Being the first PlayStation footie game to offer the managerial aspect of soccer, *Onside* could have been more actual than *Actua Soccer* or more playable than *Power Sports Soccer*. It's not. While the strategic element of the game is enjoyable enough, the actual soccer sections are appalling. The animation is stiff and the graphics unconvincing, but even worse are the awkward controls. A wasted opportunity. **SM**



BEFORE EACH MATCH THE HOME AND AWAY STRIPS CAN BE CHANGED, ALONG WITH THE WEATHER AND HALF LENGTHS.

the three is pressed while the ball is in the air. That old favourite, 'velcro boot', is on hand to ensure that dribbling is made easy, but for reasons only known to Elite, shooting uses a power bar which unloads a bullet shot if the bar is full. However, in practice, shots are powered up from the halfway line only to be snatched away by a sliding tackle. After all, when did you ever see Alan Shearer pull back to the kick the ball at the start of a run?

Basically, though, this is just one of many faults in *Onside's* footie section. Passing is effected by guid-



CHOOSE A ONE-OFF EXHIBITION MATCH AND YOU HAVE THE OPTION TO PICK ANY TEAM FROM FOUR EUROPEAN LEAGUES.

ing an arrow to the nearest player, but as most goals are scored from solitary runs, this seems rather pointless. In contrast to the dreadful action, the in-game presentation is excellent. Various camera angles are on offer and the sprites have a solid feel to them, but the commentary, like the game itself, is very disappointing.

PSP RATING...

Graphics : 78
Animation : 60
Sound FX : 68
Music : 71
Lastability : 62
Playability : 59

65

Media

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BEST OF ALL IS
A WHOLE DISC
DEVOTED TO
THEIR WACKY
SOUND
EFFECTS.

BOOKS

ERASER

by Robert Tine

PRICE: £5.99
RELEASED BY: SIGNET
RATING: ★★

I just love the way movie adaptations cheerfully blaze across a book's cover "Now a major motion picture from:" Yeah, right, as if *Eraser* was some kind of classic adventure novel that has been transformed into a film. Nah, this is a hack novelisation doing what it needs to – taking the straightforward script and making an interesting read out of it. Tine's writing is crisp if a little perfunctory – too many short sentences which, after a while, lose the dramatic impact they're presumably designed to have. But he certainly fleshes the story out, providing some much needed background and motivation for poor bedraggled Lee, but his constant referring to Krueger as *Eraser* is highly annoying. In doing this, it suddenly provides Krueger with a personality more akin to Arnie's *Terminator* alter ego rather than the committed but quite likable human he is in this. As movie adaptations go, I've read a lot better, but then again, there is far worse out there, cashing on on far bigger movies (hello *Independence Day* and *Mission Impossible*) and this seems just about suited to the screenplay it evolves from. (GR)

DOCTOR WHO – COMPANIONS

by David J Howe and Mark Stammers

PRICE: £12.99
RELEASED BY: VIRGIN
RATING: ★★★

The perfect book for those wishing to reacquaint themselves with those figures from their childhood whose names have escaped them. The one in the kilt was called Jamie, the one with the cat suits was Zoe, the one who posed naked with

a Dalek was Jo, the one who married Tom Baker was Romana and the one with the Pamela Anderson chest (going by the pictures here – I don't remember *that* costume!) was Peri. It's not as anally retentive as a lot of these large format *Doctor Who* books tend to be – pithy, amusing text with a cheerful irreverence reigns supreme and some great little sidebars listing each companions' ability to scream, dress sense and what probably happened to them after they left. Both the actors and the characters are given coverage – or in the case of Nicola Bryant (Peri), Katy Manning (Jo) and Janet Fielding (Tegan) *un*coverage – and the whole package is a nice, amusing and yet informative book. Only the cover is a bit uninspired – silly bubbles with monochrome photos given a Warholian touch-up on a vomit-inducing purple splodge. Hmmm. (SM)

STAR WARS – THE SECRETS OF SHADOWS OF THE EMPIRE

by Mark Cotta Vaz

PRICE: £14.99
RELEASED BY: BOXTREE
RATING: ★★★

With an author who sounds like one of the bounty hunters that abound in *Shadows of the Empire*, Mark Cotta Vaz is clearly the best suited person to pen this work. His excellent *Star Wars*/Indiana Jones behind-the-scenes book makes him ideal for this, and what a good work he's created. Taking the whole concept of a game/music CD/novel/comic book/toy range based on a spin-off from a series of films ten years ago is no mean feat! That Lucasfilm have managed to create such an interest in just one of

the many *Star Wars* projects abounding at the moment is proof that their marketing department deserve an Oscar. I mean, what exactly is *Shadows of the Empire*? Every who follows *Star Wars* knows of it, but no one is exactly sure what it is. Is it a book that's become a game? A comic that's become trading cards? Action figures that have become a soundtrack? What it is, going by this book, it's a joint effort between a variety of people simply to create everything but a movie. This 'Secrets of' book looks at every stage of *Shadows of the Empire*, packed full of excellent pre-production drawings, photos of models and toys and everything else you need to have to understand this true multimedia phenomenon. If you're wondering what exactly *Shadows of the Empire* is all about, then this is the perfect book with which to sate your quest for knowledge. (GR)

BATMAN: DUAL TO THE DEATH/SHADOWS OF THE PAST

by Geary Gravel

PRICE: £3.99
RELEASED BY: BOXTREE
RATING: ★★★★★ EACH

Short and sweet adaptations, these. Gravel has taken two of Warner Bros. finest animated two-parters and done pleasant, workmanlike and highly entertaining adaptations. *Dual to the Death* (oh, what a good pun) is based on *Two Face*, the story which saw Bruce Wayne's District Attorney friend turned into the savage, twisted and malevolent Two Face, and its sequel, *Shadow of the Bat*, in which Two Face uses the new DA to frame Commissioner Gordon for corruption and this creating Batgirl as Gordon's daughter Barbara seeks to clear Daddy's name. Having been betrayed by Poison Ivy some time before, it seems fitting that Dent is the only one of the Batman regulars to take the easy way out, become

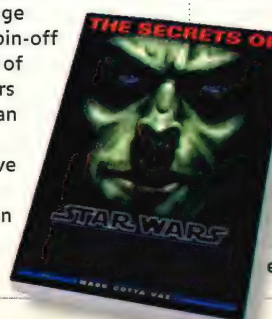
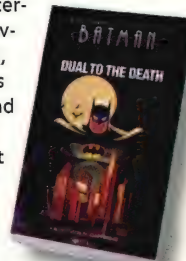
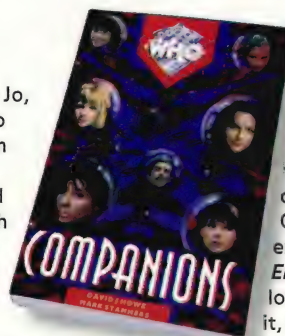
careless and confused and easy prey. The other book, *Shadows of the Past*, starts of with *Appointment in Crime Alley* and then proceeds to take a new look at *Robin's Reckoning*, in which Dick Grayson, Batman's partner and ward, encounters the man responsible for the death of his circus acrobat parents. This is superior to the first simply because the original script is so very good. While Robin tries to work out Batman's uncharacteristically weird behaviour (weird, at least, for a guy who wears tights, has wings and spends his nights kicking the crap out of guys in silly costumes), Alfred the Butler becomes concerned at the obsessive actions of both his charges. Eventually Robin learns who it is that Bats has gone off after, determined to bring the killer to his own form of justice – exactly what Bats was trying to avoid. The final water side confrontation is excellent and marked a change in the television show as Dick Grayson finally grew up. Really quite superb stuff. (GR)

SPIDER-MAN: THE LIZARD SANCTION

by Diane Duane

PRICE: £4.99
RELEASED BY: BOXTREE
RATING: ★★★

Duane's name attached to just about any book is a fair indication of the quality to follow, and this is no exception to that rule. Despite trying to cram just about every Nineties Spider-Man cliché in there (Spidey, his alter ego, his job, his wife, Aunt May, the Lizard and Venom) without making the joints too obvious, this is a rollicking adventure that put paid to a lot of claims that comic strip heroes cannot work on the text format printed page. Duane's story cracks along, taking us from upstate



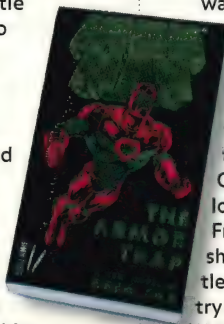
New York to the murkiest depths of the Florida Everglades as Curt Connors, a cheerful family man tries to rid himself of the genetic curse that transforms him unpredictably into the awesome Lizard. Not so gentle in real life is former con man Eddie Brock, who knows shares his life with the alien symbiotic skin suit known as Venom. With his twisted amorality running rampant, Venom sees both the Lizard and Spider-Man is potential targets in his vigilante war on crime. The story is nothing new to followers of Spidey's adventures – no matter how good a writer, there is always a formula to follow with Marvel stuff – you know no one will die, no one will exactly win and the ultimate destruction of society, New York or even the Universe has just been put off for a bit longer. But the actually telling of this story makes it worth every moment of reading. Duane is a superb choice to write for Spider-Man and his wife, and the whole thing hangs well together. (GR)



IRON MAN: THE ARMOUR TRAP
by Greg Cox

PRICE: £4.99
RELEASED BY: BOXTREE
RATING: ★★

Another Marvel hero, recently revitalised on television and video and now starring in his first novel, Iron Man is a strange chap. A millionaire, with all the wine, women and sex an industrialist could ask for, yet he still chooses to risk his own life to help others.. What a guy! Then there's Jim Rhodes, Stark's former personal pilot, bodyguard and all round nice guy, he wears the other suit of armour, known as War Machine. Between them, the two are formidable foes, yet this story utilises the man under the suit a little too much. Okay, so he's trapped by Hydra, led by the enigmatic (and slightly ga-ga) Baron Strucker, and has the armour stolen. Placed in cyberspace, Stark is forced to face imaginary hell while Rhodes tries to find and rescue him. Although Strucker is nicely por-



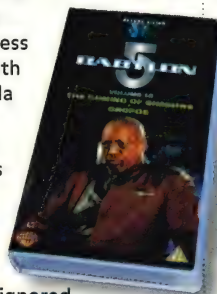
trayed, one can't help but feel that fans of Iron Man, or those beginning to get intrigued by the character, may be somewhat dismayed by his lack of action. Cox has undoubtedly written a fine character-driven story, but it's more about Stark and his friend War Machine than about Iron Man. (GR)

VIDEOS

BABYLON 5 – THE COMING OF SHADOWS AND GROPOS

PRICE: £12.99
RELEASED BY: BEYOND VISION
RATING: ★★

Now in full swing, the second season of *Babylon 5* reaches an important stage with *The Coming of Shadows*, as the title is also the Season Two subtitle. Here we see the darker side of Londo as his own aims take precedence over the delicate peace that Babylon 5 typifies. With the elderly Centurian leader Turhan aboard the station, Londo forms an alliance with the Shadows to usurp his Emperor. Meanwhile the Narn are planning the same thing, but through different means. All these events conspire to mark the potential beginning of the end of every alliance Captain Sheridan has fought hard to create. The second episode is less involved with the umbrella themes of the season, but focuses very much on one character – the too-frequently ignored doctor, Stephen Franklin. An overused concept only American fantasy television seems capable of perpetuating, Franklin and his daddy are estranged and it will take a battle aboard the station to reunite them. Assuming they want to be reunited –

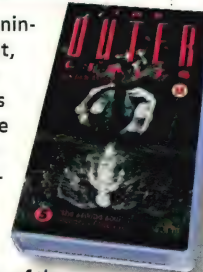


daddy is a legendary soldier, Stephen Franklin is a medical man. You get the gist? You see the cliché? As a sideline to this, security bod Garibaldi falls madly in love with one of daddy Franklin's soldiers. But she's due to join the battle soon but promises to try and come back alive. Will she? What do you think...? (GR)

NEW OUTER LIMITS 5

PRICE: £12.99
RELEASED BY: BEYOND VISION
RATING: ★★

Whether it is unintentional or not, *The New Outer Limits* episodes seemed to have been paired in themes recently. This month's pair *The Second Soul* and *Corner of the Eye* both deal with the thought of aliens among us. *The Second Soul* begins with an *X-Files*-style conspiracy scenario, where a race of aliens come to Earth requesting our dead so they can use them as hosts. In addition to the moral issues of whether this is ethical, a secondary plot-line deals with how people would react if their loved ones were actually controlled by someone else. Sadly, a promising episode then wanders way off course as the alien machinations are revealed in a rather wet 'they're nice, really' ending. *Corner of the Eye* follows the same pattern of a priest who, because of a tumour on his brain, is the only person who can see aliens in our midst. These aliens are not friendly, though, and give the priest healing powers which elevate him to deity status.



It soon transpires, though, that the aliens are planning to take over, using such skills having been seen as benevolent creatures willing to share their properties, and the episode wanders towards another weak ending in the inevitable twist in the final scene. As *The New Outer Limits* releases continue, the series of losing all the twists and tight plots from its promising beginnings, and frankly these latest episodes are very weak US fare. (SM)

INSEKTORS

PRICE: £9.99
RELEASED BY: CHANNEL 4
RATING: ★★★

Channel 4 has, since its inception, been a playground for superb animation. Most of this has been aimed at (and wasted on) young kids. The sublime *Dangermouse*, the woefully underrated new *Magic Roundabout* stories and the very surreal *Fourways Farm* are all programmes that work on two levels – traditional ten

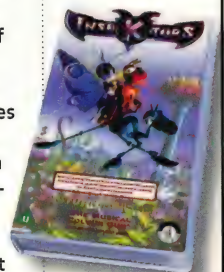
minute adventure for the youngsters, but some very satirical, dry humour that adults can latch onto. Now enter *Insektors*. Fresh from the success of Disney's *Toy Story*, the world has finally woken up to the possibilities presented by computer generated images and we have a wholly computer animated series. While not enjoying the self-referentialism of America's excellent CGI series *Reboot*, *Insektors* instead simply uses the medium in place of traditional cell animation. Storywise, what we have here is a thinly (a bit too thinly, in fact) disguised ecological versus industrial story. The Verigreens live in one area of the Black Planet while the destructive Kruds live in the other. Like the original Sixties *Magic Roundabout* cartoons, these have been produced in Europe, with new British dialogue written to fit the pictures, making way for some very stylised humour, a great range of regional accents and some wonderfully depreciating one-liners. Miss this, and you may be missing an excellent new cult series in the making.

TRAINSPOTTING

PRICE: RENTAL
RELEASED BY: POLYGRAM
RATING: ★★★★★

Never let it be said that *Trainspotting* glamorises heroin. This film interpretation of Irvine Welsh's book is a look at how low the drug can make you feel, and also offers a gruelling insight into how it affects the users and those around them. Ewan McGregor is Mark Renton a long-term user, and the film revolves around a series of vignettes of the escapades of him and his mates, Sick Boy, Spud, and the local maniac, Begbie. Realising that life with these 'mates' is getting him nowhere (Spud is sent to prison, Sick Boy starts pimping, and Begbie becomes wilder), Renton moves to London, only to be dragged back down again as his friends move up with him. *Trainspotting* is every bit as dark as the brilliant book, and Danny Boyle has done a fantastic job of transferring what is basically a series of individual scenes into a cohesive plot. There was lots of hype about *Trainspotting*, but all of it can be justified, and it quite rightly deserves its praise as the greatest British film to date. (SM)

ALSO AVAILABLE THIS MONTH IS DISNEY'S CLASSIC ANIMATED TALE, 101 DALMATIANS – DIGITALLY REMASTERED. AND IN THE CINEMAS NOW, DISNEY ARE TRAILING THEIR FORTHCOMING LIVE ACTION VERSION, WITH GLENN CLOSE AS CRUELLA DE VILLE.



PIRANHA II: FLYING KILLERS

PRICE: £12.99
RELEASED BY: MIA
RATING: ★★★

Before the success of *The Terminator*, and the big budget smashes of *The Abyss* and *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, director James Cameron cut his teeth on this low-budget sequel to Joe Dante's tongue-in-cheek *Jaws* rip-off. A sunken supply ship contains a shoal of deadly Piranha fish, but government experiments into biological weapons have added an extra weapon to the razor-toothed fishes' bow – they can fly. Thus,

as a holiday resort manager refuses to believe the warnings of a local sheriff (Lance Henrikson) and his marine biologist ex-wife, minutes later people are screaming as the fish fly on to the picturesque beach to eat them. For such a crap concept, *Piranha II* is actually quite enjoyable. It never really builds up any tension and the coming fish attacks can be spotted a mile off, but the fishy maulings are well orchestrated and Cameron keeps things dark enough to hide the obvious rubber nature of the attackers. Schlock horror at its best, although we'd much

rather see Dante's predecessor get a release. (SM)

HALLOWEEN (WIDESCREEN)

PRICE: £12.99
RELEASED BY: MIA
RATING: ★★★★★

Before Jason Voorhees and Freddy Krueger teamed up with Hollywood to turn the 'slasher' film into mass-market non-entities, John Carpenter was responsible for the grand-daddy of the genre. Michael Myers is an escaped lunatic who is has returned to Haddonfield where he killed his sister several years earlier. With his psychiatrist, Doctor Loomis (Donald Pleasance), trying to track him down, Michael is back in town for Halloween and plans to slice his way through the neighbourhood, with a very young Jamie-Lee Curtis acting as his main target. Whereas the many *Friday 13th* and *Elm Street* films degenerated into comedic non-starters, *Halloween* is jump a minute territory. Michael's attacks are relatively gore-less, but executed with such expertise that the film belies its 'slasher' status. *Halloween* is one of the seminal horror pieces, and this

widescreen release is long overdue. Michael Myers may have joined Jason and Freddy in the over exposed league in recent years, but Carpenter's classic shows what potential the genre has.

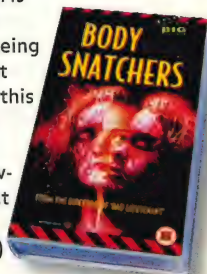
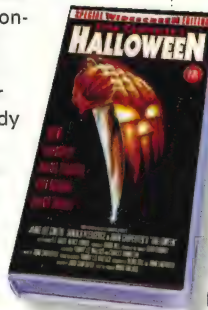
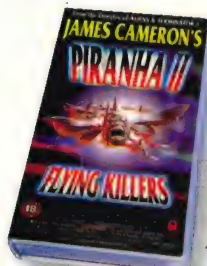
Also available from MIA this month are *Hell Night*, in which Linda Blair discovers life in the movies after *The Exorcist* involves being stalked by a deranged mutant; *Parasite* which sees the world coping with the titular monsters after a nuclear war has devastated the planet and anarchy reigns; and *Fade to Black*, an award-winning movie in which a young man becomes so embroiled in the fantasy world offered by his diet of films that he begins stalking people in the persona of his heroes. *Fade to Black* features an early appearance by fan favourite Mickey Rourke before he found fame in films such as *9½ Weeks*. (SM)

BODYSNATCHERS

PRICE: £11.99
RELEASED BY: THE BIG PICTURE
RATING: ★★★★★

No sooner did I mention in last issue's review of the 1978 version of *Invasion of the Bodysnatchers* that a straight-to-video remake of the remake was done, than it turns up on my desk, ready for review.

There's a box set here just waiting to be issued, someone. The original black-and-white chiller, the glossy Seventies mega version and this, astonishingly good Nineties twist – notable for the fact that Robert H Solo produced 'em both. Okay so the "Invasion of the..." tag has gone (possibly to avoid any claims to copyright by original author of the novel, Jack Finney), but it is still the same basic storyline. Alien pods, contained group of people, and ultimately the fear that the menace will spread to the rest of the world. A cast of not-that-well-knowns led by Gabrielle Anwar, with 'guest stars' Forest Whitaker and Meg Tilly, make this a wholly enjoyable romp, spoiled only by the predictability of its climax, and a couple of dodgy performances (an odd soldier or two look as if they're played by embarrassed real military types rather than actors). Then again, it is that familiarity which gives you time to absorb a lot of the character motivation and actions. Because you know by the title alone what is going on, your attention is diverted to other things. It's like seeing a movie you've sat through before – this time you look for the subtle bits rather than following the plot. Great stuff, through and through. (GR)



COMING NEXT MONTH, A LOOK AT THE NEW WipeOUT CD SOUND-TRACK, FEATURING THE PRODIGY, UNDERWORLD, THE CHEMICAL BROTHERS, ORBITAL AND LEFTFIELD AMONGST OTHERS.

WIN WIN WIN

BABYLON 5

To celebrate the arrival of the latest *Babylon 5* tape, Beyond Vision have given us five copies of Volumes 15, available in glorious Dolby Surround Sound, featuring the episodes *The Coming of Shadows* and *Gropos*. The first five names out of the hat will win the tapes. All you need to tell us on a postcard or back of a sealed envelope is which alien race Ambassador Kosh belongs to in the series. Is it:

- A) Centauri
- B) Vorlon
- or
- C) Narn

Send your postcard to *Babylon 5* (15) Competition at the *PlayStation Plus* editorial address (see Page 5), to arrive before November 11th 1996.

BODYSNATCHERS

Available as part of the Big Picture col-

lection, this Nineties version of the classic story is out now. We have five copies to give away and all you have to tell us is who wrote the original story the film is based upon. Was it:

- A) H G Wells
- B) Robert Bloch
- or
- C) Jack Finney

Send your postcard to *New Bodysnatchers* Competition at the *PlayStation Plus* editorial address (see Page 5), to arrive before November 11th 1996.

MIA HORRORS

MIA are releasing a whole clutch of seasonal cult horror films, including *Halloween* (widescreen edition), *Fade to Black*, *Piranha II*, *Hell Night* and *Parasite*. We have a set of all five films to give away and all you need to tell us is what event falls on October 31st each year. Is it:

- A) *The Great Solstice*
- B) *The Festival of Beltane*
- or
- C) *The Festival of All Hallows Eve*

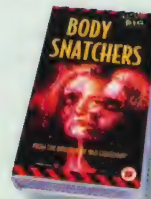
Send your postcard to MIA Horrors Competition at the *PlayStation Plus* editorial address (see Page 5), to arrive before November 11th 1996.

INSEKTORS

Two tapes of *Insektors* are available from Channel 4 video in the shops, but you can win one of three sets we have to give away. All you have to tell us what CGI stands for:

- A) Computer Generated Image
- B) Computer-based Great Ideas
- or
- C) Created General Individuals

Send your postcard to *Insektors* Competition at the *PlayStation Plus* editorial address (see Page 5), to arrive before November 11th 1996.



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HELPFUL HINTS

I just couldn't sit back and not try to help poor old Charles Thornhill, Adel Broadhead or Alasdair Brownsword so I am E-mailing you this letter in the hope that it will resolve their present situation.

I am a Computer Operator, working with a very large main frame system. This system has numerous forms of I/O media and through experience I have come to recognise certain problems and their causes. The jumping of the FMV sequences and the poor loading is easily rectified, nine times out of ten, at no (or very little) cost! I started to get jumping on my *Tekken* disc, bad loading times on my *Mortal Kombat* disc and missing sound and bad loading times and jumping FMV on my *Need for Speed* disc. I immediately recognised this as a read error, either caused by my discs or on my PlayStation. By a simple process of elimination I sorted the problem.

Firstly I cleaned the disks (the reason being that if I was to bugger anything up, the discs are a lot cheaper than a new PlayStation!) but the problem was still there, so I took them to my mates house and tried them on his machine where they worked fine, so it obviously wasn't the myriad of scratches on the back of them causing the problem.

Next step turned out to be the solution. Clean the machine! Using a cotton bud and some alcohol media cleaning spray (obtainable from any good computer supplier or record shop) I simply wiped the lens and hey presto one stunning next gen console with fast access and clear FMV. Problem solved. By the way, I tried to make my life easy by using a cleaning disk in my PlayStation to start of with, but it was crap and had no effect, as is the norm with a lot of these products, trust me, one cotton bud and one spray of cleaning solution and bob will be your uncle. If all else fails try turning your machine upside down or on its side, this does work.

Andrew Raistrick, E-Mail

I read in Issue 11 that a lot of letters regarded messed up



FMV. Here are my solutions.

The reason why the FMV becomes odd is because the PlayStation overheats. I noticed this when mine totally died on me, while playing *Resident Evil*, and I unhooked it to throw it into a wall – okay, perhaps not, but I definitely had the intention! I noticed it was really warm and decided to put it outside, (Sweden – ten degrees Celsius) and left it there for about twenty minutes. After that I hooked it up and it worked as a charm.

To avoid this problem again, I simply place a fan behind the PlayStation and now it's as good as new.

John Johansson, Sweden

...I became concerned with my machine about two months ago with games not loading or crashing constantly. So I did something about it.

I rang Sony's Customer Service Line and they were very helpful and understanding. They took down my details and within five working days, they had sent round a courier to collect my machine and swap it. Yes, swap it for a brand new one. I was impressed...

Keiron, Middlesex

...I thought my problems were just the games themselves but after exchanging them for other copies, my PlayStation continued to play up. As my gaurentee had run out, I thought I'd have to put up with it and carry on. Nevertheless, it got worse and worse



TEKKEN – FOR SOME IT'S THE WORST FOR CRASHING, FOR OTHERS, IT'S NO PROBLEM AT ALL.

(unlike Mr Boadhead in Issue 11, *Tekken* was the only game that worked perfectly) and so I phoned Sony. They asked if I kept my PlayStation on the floor. No. They wanted the serial number and said that a courier would be round to pick it up within two weeks.

And sure enough, it was collected and a replacement provided. I wondered how much it would cost to repair mine, but no – the replacement was mine to keep. They told me that this was a regular problem and as they were making the machines to meet demand so

quickly, the weren't all getting tested. Not wishing to bad-mouth Sony, who were – after all – good to me, but I do think that they really ought to test their machines properly if they want to carry on selling them.

Chris Evans, Bilston

...I had these problems with my first PlayStation and now, once again, with my second. All the FMVs and intro sequences splutter and games crash after just a couple of goes.

This appears to be a design fault – most of your correspon-

dents relate that their problems started after two or three months. To pay £90 for repair is totally unacceptable, especially if it's going to do the same another three months down the road. I have found one way to help this though. Place the machine on its side, on a hard surface (ie a table) and it should work perfectly...

Stephen Metcalfe, Newport

...The problems everyone has with FMV and games crashing may be related to the way discs are being handled. Many people tug at the CD by the edges, pulling it upwards off the lens spindle. This throws the lens out of alignment and produces the jerks.

The disc should be taken out with the forefinger on the spindle and the thumb on the front edge of the disc. Just life the disc and remove it – just as the instructions with the PlayStation tell you to...

Ian Paulton, Sheffield

...My first PlayStation began spluttering and crashing just after Christmas. Not wishing to be denied festive period gaming, I returned it to the point of purchase – rather than Sony – and received a new one. Fine.

Three months later PlayStation Number Two succumbed to Mad Station Disease. This time I returned it to Sony. To date, PlayStation Number Three is working fine, but for how long? Fear of MSD is definitely impairing my pleasure and subsequently I use my 'Station a lot less.

Now my mate's 'Station has developed the lurgy. He works on Sony software for a software company and attributes the problem to "very cheap disc drives and/or poor lens/laser housings" causing misalignment. We are now both paranoid about future breakdowns as September 28th sees the expiry of our guarantees.

Personally, three PlayStations per year on average could see repair bills working out at about £250, not to mention two to three months of enduring errors and waiting for repairs. The last thing I want to do is scaremonger, but this is ridiculous. Having invested in a



RECENTLY WE'VE HAD A GLUT OF LETTERS BEMOANING INCIDENTS WITH THE PLAYSTATION'S LOADING AND FMV PLAYBACK, AS WELL AS GENERAL MID-GAME CRASHING. THIS ISSUE, WE PRESENT SOME OF YOUR SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS.



new format, I want to see it succeed and develop, but there is definitely a manufacturing/design/component quality problem. Without longevity and reliability, the format will become unviable. So what the hell are Sony going to do about it? I suggest they pinpoint the problem immediately, redesign the problem component and then offer installation of the improved component to all PlayStation owners free of charge. With days ticking away to the end of my PlayStation's warranty, I regret that the temptation of defecting to the Nintendo 64 and hassle free cartridges (albeit at £70 a shot) is increasingly preferable.

Dougie Law, Sheffield

So to round up the solutions offered to these problems – keep your PlayStation off the floor and on a hard surface; keep it fed with cool air (a solution we discovered during this year's heat-wave as the PlayStation Plus offices began to resemble a sauna); use the machine on its side and be very careful with the lens spindle when taking discs out, and keep the lens and discs cleaned with the proper fluids. Of course, not all of these solutions will work for everyone, nor do we necessarily recommend all of them (putting the PlayStation on its side may well do some other kind of harm), but at least two of you have had positive dealings with Sony's Consumer Help Line, so maybe they're the best people to ask.

RESIDENT DRIVE?

I have recently bought *Resident Evil* and am very disappointed with it. I don't think it's anywhere near the 94% you gave it – it should be down in the 70s. I was bored stiff after wasting the zombies and killing the plant at the start of the game. After all, you're just running around a mansion trying to solve stupid puzzles.

As for the acting – I've seen better acting in a Swedish porn film! I thought the gameplay



RESIDENT EVIL – AARON DOIG OF NEWCASTLE THINKS IT'S JUST A STUPID PUZZLE GAME.

was about as interesting as a public toilet. Where was the excitement of *Doom* or *Wipeout* I ask you? Okay, so I am probably part of a small percentage of people who don't like the game, and I acknowledge that the graphics and sound effects are top notch.

Aaron Doig, Newcastle

ARCADE IMPERFECT

Being an ex-Amiga owner, I was excited to hear that the excellent *Gunship 2000* was being released for the PlayStation. When I loaded it up I switched all the Mission Difficulty settings to Reality Mode. I started my mission and instantly crashed into the nearest hill. Hang on, I thought, when that happened on the Amiga, it was Game Over time. So I quit and made sure the Reality Mode was on. It was. Oh dear, Microprose have gone arcade-style. If I wanted an arcade-style helicopter game, I'd have bought *Thunderhawk II*. I don't consider bumping into hills and surviving very realistic, do you?

James Offord, Rugby

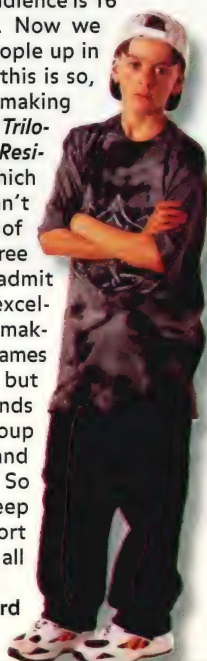
HELICOPTER + HILL = CRASH. YET YOU WALK AWAY FROM IT. IS THIS VERY REALISTIC? JAMES OFFORD OF RUGBY CERTAINLY DOES NOT THINK SO.



CHILD'S PLAY? REALLY?

In your *Child's Play* article in Issue 11, the man from Sony said "Our key audience is 16 – 24 year-olds. Now we want to pick people up in their teens." If this is so, why are they making games like *Alien Trilogy*, *Doom* and *Resident Evil*, which younger fans can't buy. I know a lot of people won't agree with me, but I admit the games are excellent, don't stop making that sort of games on my account, but most of my friends in my age group prefer sports and beat 'em ups. So long as they keep making every sort of game, we will all be very happy.

Darren Crawford (12), Dublin



FAQ

THE MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS OF THE MONTH ARE, ONCE AGAIN, MET WITH STRAIGHT ANSWERS.

Q If there's one area where the Saturn walks all over the PlayStation it is in terms of hardware add-ons for the machine. When Sony launched the PlayStation, they listed a host of peripherals scheduled for release, including MPEG cards, numerous controllers and there was even talk of a modem to make the PlayStation internet compatible. Since then, we have witnessed the release of the NegCom, the Multi-Tap and the link-up cable, while the Saturn has received its MPEG system, and the Sega internet card is set to be here for Christmas. Have Sony given up the ghost as far as peripherals go?

A To be honest, stories regarding a modem and the MPEG system were just ideas Sony were looking into, but having seen the consummate failure of the MPEG card (ownership is said to be very small, and the films released for the system are awful – crap sequels to the likes of *The Philadelphia Experiment* and *Cyborg*. It's all very well adding new devices to a machine's catalogue, but at the end of the day Sony have to make a profit, and the small number of people interested in the MPEG card, or even access to the internet via a PlayStation (imagine the sluggish icon system unless the mouse came as standard), aren't high enough at present. As such, Sony are ploughing the money into software development while simultaneously keeping one eye on the market for possible openings.

Q I noticed that the PlayStation version of *Earthworm Jim* wasn't programmed by the creators of the Megadrive original, Shiny Entertainment. Is this because Shiny no longer want to be associated with the character, and if so are they preparing any games for a future PlayStation release?

A Shiny merged with Interplay last year, and consequently were contractually obliged to produce a number of games for them. They were never actually down to develop a version of *Earthworm Jim* for the PlayStation, but Virgin held the rights still so were legally entitled to farm the conversion out if required. As for Shiny's plans, they are working on a number of new titles for Interplay, with the first an all-out killathon called *Murder Death Kill (MDK)*. The game is leading on PC for a release sometime before Christmas, but Interplay have also commissioned a PlayStation version which is scheduled for a month or two after.

Q In your news pages in Issue 12, you mentioned that there may be a hitch with Acclaim's long overdue conversion of *X-Men: Children of the Atom*. With Virgin now snapping up all Capcom titles, does this mean that the game is effectively scrapped, and we are never likely to see it on the PlayStation. My son is a massive fan of his friend's Saturn game and was upset to hear that he may not be able to buy it himself. Can you clear up what's happening and detail a release date if there is one?

A *X-Men: Children of the Atom* has had a very difficult birth, but Acclaim are in possession of fresh code and are said to be very pleased with the progress of the game. Virgin's deal with Capcom gives them first dibs on the likes of *Star Gladiators*, *Resident Evil 2* and *Marvel Superheroes*, but Capcom's Japanese research and development teams work on titles individually, so it seems unlikely that they would pull a team of a 70% complete game when they signed the deal with Virgin. All the same, Acclaim still cannot confirm a definite date for the PlayStation release. All code for games for release this Christmas had to reach Sony for approval by the start of September, and with a glut of software already in line, it seems very unlikely that PlayStation *X-Men: Children of the Atom* will emerge in time for a December unveiling, it's more likely to slip until February or March.

Next Month

FIFA '97

PLAYSTATION PLUS VISITS EA'S CANADIAN OFFICE FOR AN EXCLUSIVE BEHIND-THE-SCENES LOOK AT WHAT COULD BE THE FOOTBALL GAME TO END ALL FOOTBALL GAMES. WE TALK TO THE PROGRAMMERS, ARTISTS AND MOTION-CAPTURE STAR DAVID GINOLA TO GET THE FULL SP ON THIS PREMIERSHIP CONTENDER.



WipEout 2097

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Soviet Strike

EA'S SECOND CONTRIBUTION TO OUR NEXT ISSUE IS A FULL REVIEW OF THEIR STUNNING-LOOKING SOVIET STRIKE. WITH ITS PEDIGREE ESTABLISHED ACROSS NUMEROUS 16BIT FORMATS, EA ARE PLANNING TO TAKE THE STRIKE SERIES INTO THE NEXT GENERATION, AND WE'RE THE FIRST TO STRAP IN FOR THE RIDE.



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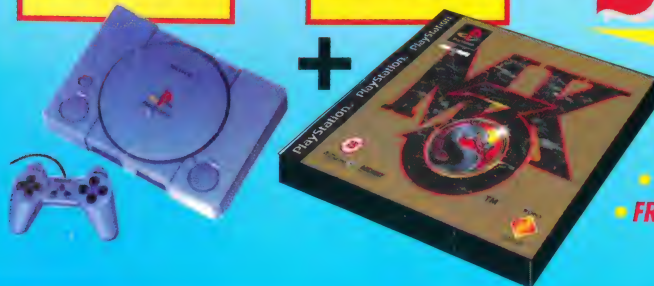
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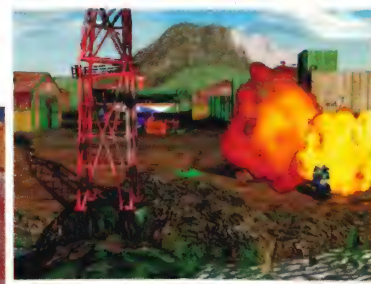


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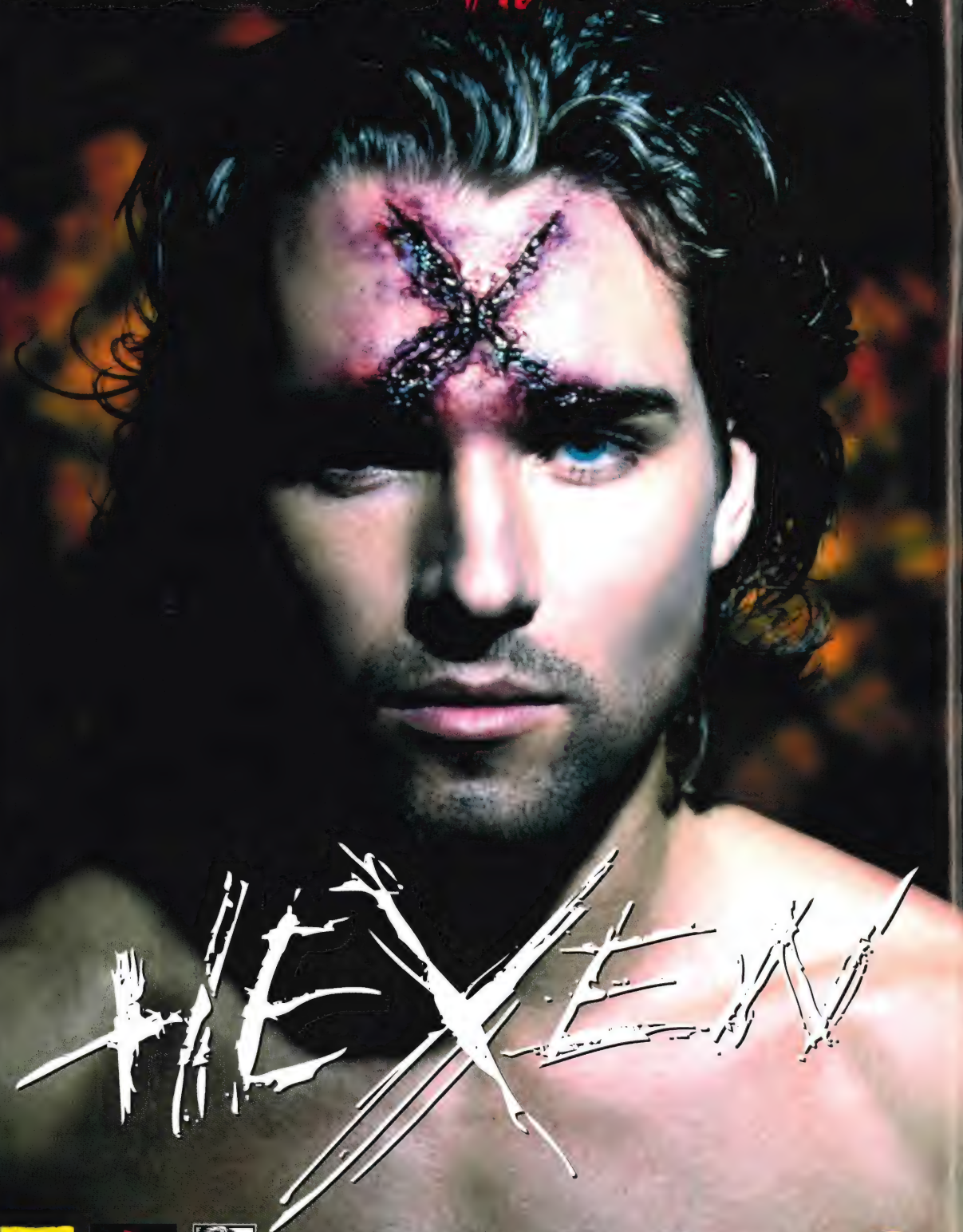
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A MAN AND A
HALF! BERSERKER
PACKIN' MAN
AND A HALF!

THERE'S NOTHING WRONG
WITH YOU THAT I CAN'T FIX...
WITH MY HANDS!

DYNAMITE!

SPLATTER!

WRITTEN BY STEVE 'BODY BAG' BEHLING AND
MICHAEL 'SPLATTER' STEWART

ART AND COLOR DESIGN BY TOM
'GALLOW'S' GRINDBERG

LETTERING BY EDD 'DEAD FEAR'

EDITED BY THE SLAUGHTERHOUSE 3.

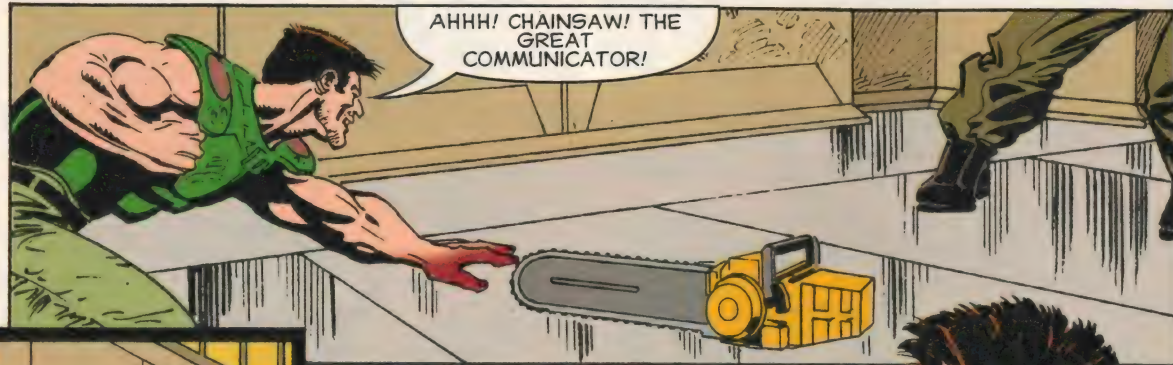
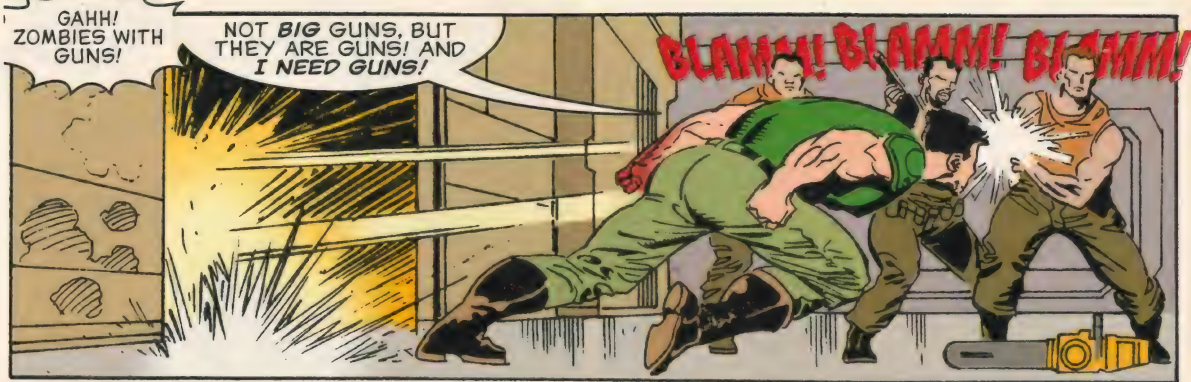
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WILSON AND THE CREW AT ID SOFTWARE

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JUSTIN 'MASSACRE' MCCORMACK, JEREMY 'KIDNEY' KOVE,
LISA 'INSTANT LOBOTOMY' LEATHERMAN, DANN 'MACHETE'
MOSHESHO AND BOB 'INTERN' PRODDOR ALL HAD SOMETHING
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GROOVY.

CLICK

AT THIS PARTICULAR MOMENT IN TIME I DON'T BELIEVE I HAVE A HEALTHIER OR MORE DEEPLY-FELT RESPECT FOR ANY OBJECT IN THE UNIVERSE THAN THIS HERE SHOTGUN...



HEY, CHAINGUN! THE HELL WITH RESPECT!

CHUNK!



GIMME. C'MON. GIMME.

SHLORP



HOY, HOY, I'M THE BOY...

...PACKIN' 80 POUNDS OF HEAVENLY JOY!



HHHSSSSSSSSSS...

NOW THIS IS GOOD! BIG GUN! NOT THE BIG GUN, BUT...



ARRRRGH!
TURNED MY BACK...
THAT WAS STUPID!



STUPID! STUPID!
STUPID IMP!



YOU'RE STUPID! AND
YOU'RE GONNA BE
STUPID AND DEAD!

DANCE!
DANCE, BONEDADDY!



BUDDA BUDDA



BUDDA BUDDA



BUDDA BUDDA

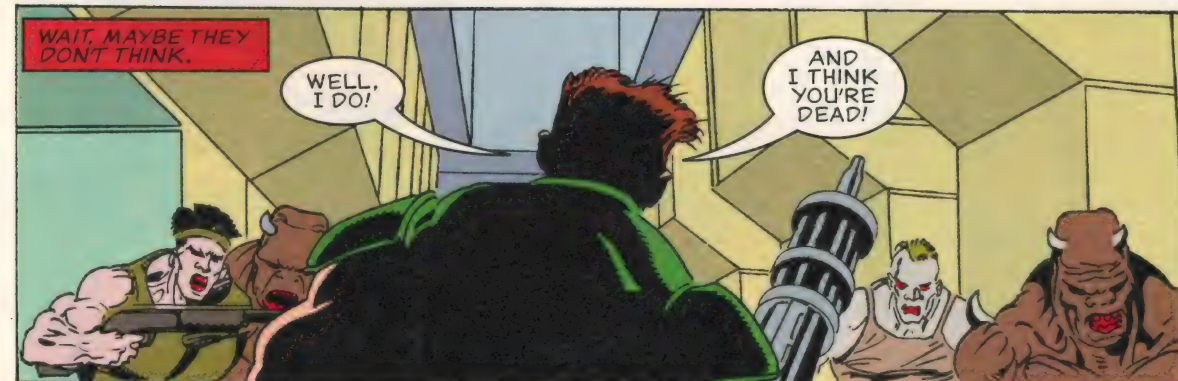


OH YEAH!
YEAH!

DIG THE PROWESS,
THE CAPACITY FOR
VIOLENCE!

I'M THE MAN! I'M
SUPERBAD!

IMPS?
ZOMBIES?
YOU THINK YOU
CAN GET ME?!



WAIT, MAYBE THEY
DON'T THINK.

WELL,
I DO!

AND I THINK
YOU'RE DEAD!



DEAD!

BUDDA BUDDA



DEAD!



DEAD!

KA SHUNK



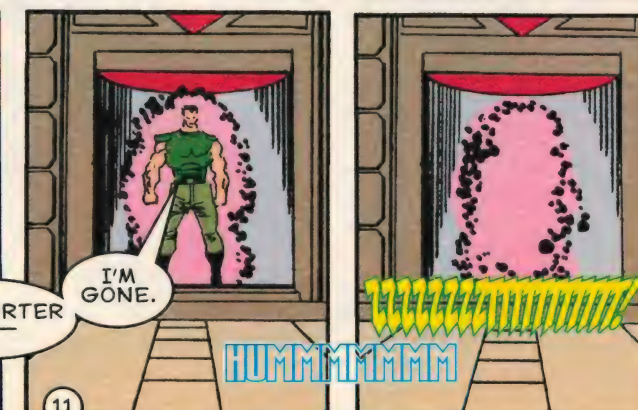
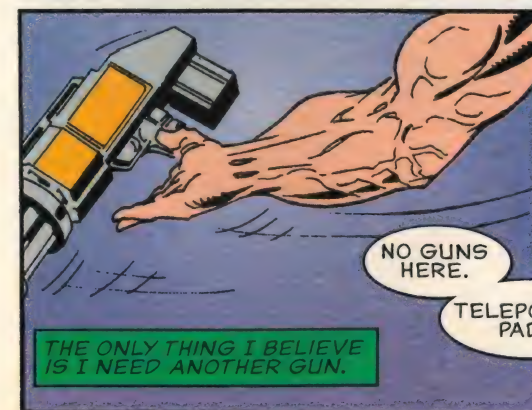
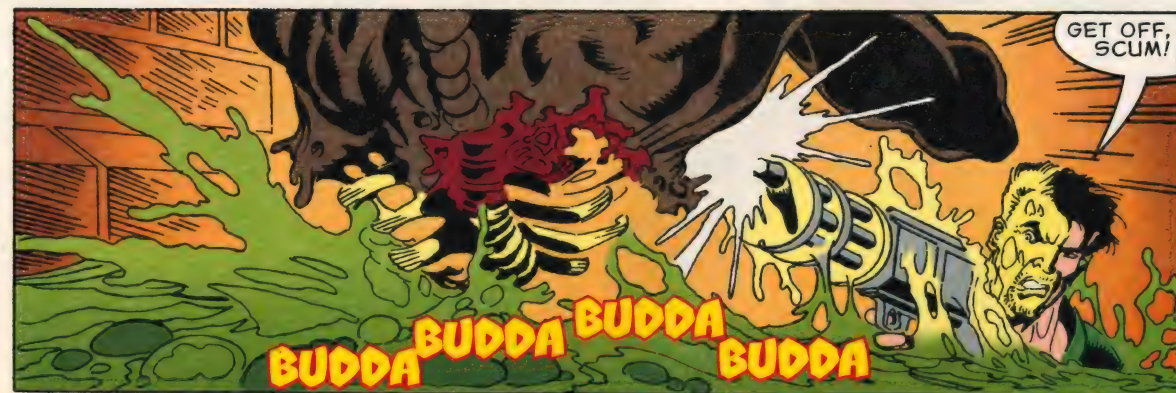
LORD AMIGHTY, I FEEL
MY TEMPERATURE RISE!

HUH?
WHUZZAT?
WHUZZAT?



WOO BABY, I'M
BURNIN' OUT OF
CONTROL!

BUDDA BUDDA
BUDDA BUDDA



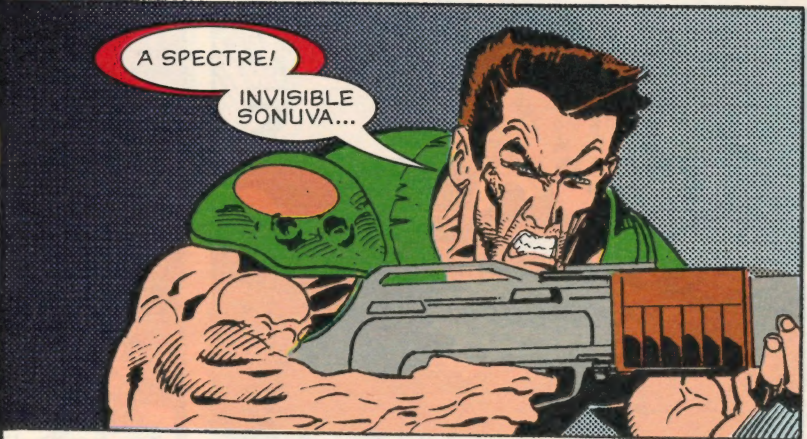


AND BABY, IT'S ALL ABOUT ME!



AH-HAH, I'M COOKIN' WITH PLASMA! NOW WE'RE IN THE BIG LEAGUES!

WOW! NOW I'M IN A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT PLACE!



BLEW UP THAT SPECTRE REAL GOOD!

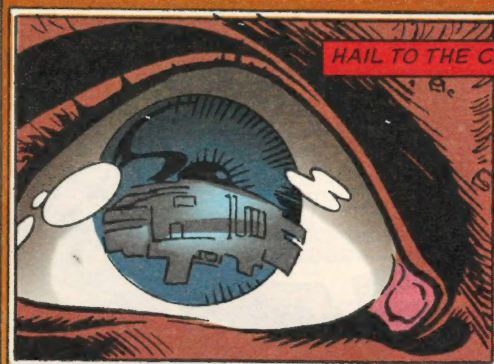
I HAVE REALLY HAD JUST ABOUT ALL I CAN T...TAKE...

THERE! THE MOST BEAUTIFUL SIGHT ANY SOLDIER CAN BEHOLD...THE GUN.

THE BIG GUN!

RAAARRGGG!

UHHHHHNNGG!



HAIL TO THE CHIEF!



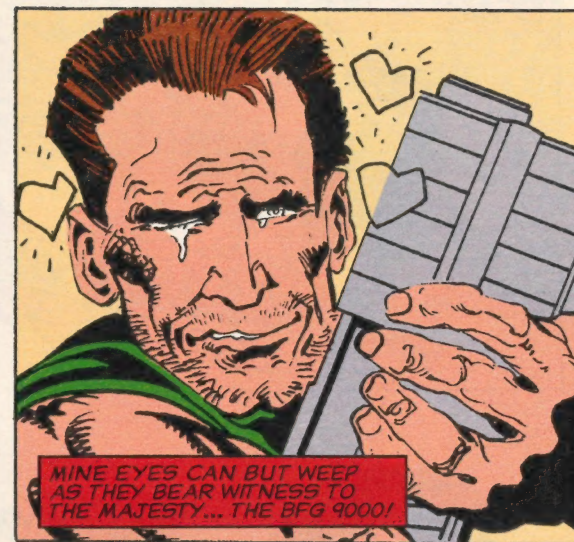
YOU WANT A PIECE OF ME? C'MON, C'MON, COME AT ME WITH IT!

OH, YEAH! DO YOU GET IT NOW? PAPA'S GOT A BRAND NEW BAG!

DEATH SURROUNDS ME, YET IN MY HEAD I HEAR SOMETHING THAT SOUNDS LIKE ANGELS!



LO, I HAVE FOUND THE HOLY GRAIL OF FIREPOWER!



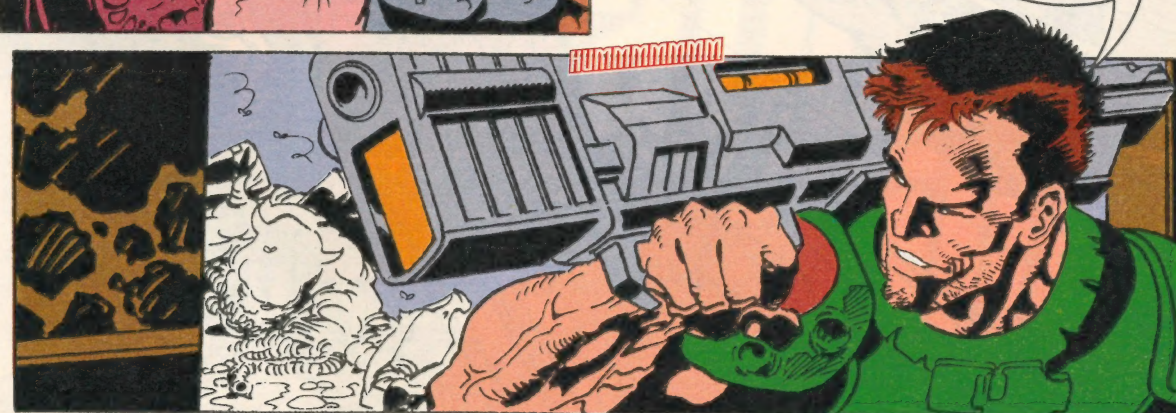
MINE EYES CAN BUT WEEP AS THEY BEAR WITNESS TO THE MAJESTY... THE BFG 9000!



AS I STRIDE KNEE DEEP THROUGH THE DEAD, ALL IS CLEAR. I KNOW WHAT MUST BE DONE...

MY CAUSE IS JUST...MY WILL IS STRONG...

...AND MY GUN IS VERY, VERY LARGE!






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OLD SOLDIERS NEVER DIE, THEY JUST TURN INTO BLOODTHIRSTY

MUTANT ZOMBIES

FINAL
DOOM



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